

Voltaire in the Shades;

O R,

DIALOGUES

ON THE

DEISTICAL CONTROVERSY.

Refellere sine pertinaciâ, et refelli sine iracundiâ
parati sumus. Non tam Authores in disputando,
quam rationis momenta quærenda sunt.

TULL.

L O N D O N:

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M D C C L X X.

DIARY

ON THE

G. Vasey
1865

DEISTICAL CONTROVERSY

Referring to the various articles and
papers which have been published in
connection with the controversy between
the Unitarian and the Deist.

By D. N. D. O. N.
Edited by G. Vasey, M. A.
T. and J. W. in Cambridge
The Deist, in Oxford

W. B. D. O. N.

INTRODUCTION.

THE confidence of philosophical superiority which the Infidel writers assume leaves a strong impression on young minds. Conscious of this impression, but unwilling to build his belief on any other foundation than the result of his own enquiries, the Author of the following pages, at an early time

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of life, resolved on a careful perusal and a candid examination of the arguments of those modern Philosophers who arrogate to themselves the honourable title of Free-thinkers. He read their writings ; and, amazed sometimes at their sophistry, and sometimes at the falsehood of their assertions, he gave vent to the warmth of a youthful indignation, and committed his remarks to paper. These were the first sketches of the Dialogues which are now offered to

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to the Public. If it should be said that some names, respectable in the world of letters, are treated with too much freedom, he would reply, that in preparing these sheets for the press, he was unwilling to restrain the indignation which he felt at Twenty against the sophistry that would destroy the dearest hope of his heart, the hope of yet meeting the deceased friend in another and better state of existence.

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PERHAPS it may be said, that here is a confession of prejudice: what one earnestly wishes, one easily believes. Yes, it is sometimes so; but there are examples to the contrary. An affectionate mother who earnestly wishes the recovery of her child, will, from that very earnestness, be jealous of every symptom, and alarmed with the fear of death in the slightest danger. When one earnestly wishes for immortality, like the parent, he will be alarmed at every pre-

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pretence which offers to disprove the validity of his tenure, and will view every argument not only in its utmost force, but often with a magnifying dread and jealousy. And thus, that anxiety, which some would term prejudice, when joined with a want of opportunity or capacity to examine the subject, by first begetting a suspicious alarm in the mind, has been the means of making more infidels than all the writings of Voltaire.

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THE arts of misrepresentation and insinuation, and of alarming the uninstructed, so eminently possessed by the infidel writers, cannot fail of their effect on the multitude. Without the strong impression of some leading data, one must be lost in the labyrinth of their various reasonings, and wander about like themselves, in sceptical giddiness. But the leading data are easily obtained. The Creation discovers Design, Design implies Intelligence, there is therefore a Governing Mind :

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Mind : This easy demonstration kept ever in view, with the only rational answer of a question which it leads to, will secure every good heart and intelligent capacity a safe passage through all the windings and turnings, and all the glosses of infidelity. The question here meant is, What is Man? or, in other words, Whether or no is human condition an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of the Author of Being?

To

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To this grand question there is no satisfactory answer to be found among the writers for Infidelity. The result of their whole arguments is thus summed up by a distinguished writer of the Party. "The whole," (it is of Religion he is speaking, and Religion of every kind is no other than an attempt to answer the above grand question) "The whole," says he, "is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment, appear
" the

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“ the only result of our most
“ accurate scrutiny concerning
“ this subject. But such is the
“ frailty of human reason, and
“ such the irresistible contagion
“ of opinion, that even this
“ deliberate doubt could scarce
“ be upheld, did we not en-
“ large our view, and opposing
“ one species of superstition to
“ another, set them a quarrelling,
“ while we ourselves, during
“ their fury and contention,
“ happily make our escape into
“ the calm, though obscure,
“ regions of Philosophy *.”

* Conclusion of H—’s Essay on Religion.

By

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By these obscure regions into which he means that the wise man will retire, nothing but deliberate and fixed Scepticism can be understood: And thus, having destroyed the belief of a future state, because some Religionists of all ages have talked nonsense about it, no other answer to the grand question remains but this, That human condition, where virtue is often to the last unrewarded, and vice unpunished, is indeed an impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of the Author of Being ;

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Being; or to speak in the sceptical style, of the Power, whatever it be, which produced the system of things.

OTHER answer than this, without taking in the consideration of a future state, can never be given. He who sends suffering virtue for its best comfort to the obscure regions of doubt, by the most certain inference ascribes a want of intelligence or of goodness to his Maker, and excludes him from the moral world. Yet we have
only

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only to open our eyes to behold the most astonishing demonstrations of Intelligence every where stamped on the natural world. He therefore who would exclude this Intelligent Mind from the moral world, is infinitely more absurd than he who would confess that the barren deserts of Libya were the work of Infinite Wisdom, and yet at the same time assert that the fertile plains of the East and West were the fortuitous offspring of, and only sustained by, Blind Chance.

Yet

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Yet we must be gravely told that such absurd exclusion of the Deity from the moral world is “the only result of our most accurate scrutiny concerning the subject;” and “that it is the frailty of human reason that this deliberate doubt can scarce be upheld,” unless we amuse ourselves with the nonsense of antient and modern superstition!

But enough---What may be called the machinery of these Dialogues, and the supposition of
of

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of the death of Voltaire and
Rouffean, the Author, without
the least concern, leaves to the
mercy of the Critic, and has
only further to inform his Rea-
der that he is not a Clergyman.

E R R A T A.

*Page 114, line 6, for, of pervading a mere plastic cause,
read, of a mere pervading plastic cause.*

P. 178. l. 1, of the Note, for Elifsa, r. Eloifa.

*P. 183, last l. but one, for, I would to have urged, r. I
would have urged.*

*P. 186, l. 1, for, you counteract, r. you do not coun-
teract.*

DIALOGUES, &c.

VOLTAIRE.

WHITHER am I rapt in
 an instant ! How lightly I
 move ! And have I indeed
 passed the dark gulph of Death,
 and become an unembodied spirit !
 Well, I find death is not the period of
 my existence, as I often have thought
 and wished. But how solitary do I
 stray here ! No angels are with me :
 —but neither have any devils seized

B

me,

me, though the horrors of my death-bed presented them as howling around my couch. My horrors ! I yet feel them a little ; for I am not yet arrived at certainty. However, thanks to my fears, all is safe.—I died kissing a crucifix, and absolved of my sins by a good Priest.—If Mohammed be the Prophet of God, I may at least get into the second or third heaven, for the praise I have sometimes bestowed on his religion. — If the Bramins and all the contradictory Moralists of the East be acceptable to God, then high is my place in heaven ; for who has done more than I to prove that every man should have a sett of morals and a religion of his own ? Yes, this surely is the generous plan of Heaven : yet, thanks again to my fears, I am somehow

how pleased that I died a Christian. But who comes here, smiling with self-satisfaction? By heaven, 'tis either a visionary Saint from a monastery, or a Bramin just escaped from the torture of his iron-neck-band. Ha, indeed, is it you, Rousseau?

ROUSSEAU.

CHEARFUL and elated with my immortality, I seek some virtuous angel to conduct me to the Supreme. I have just now risen from a happy death-bed.—It is good * for the world that I was born!

VOLTAIRE.

IN heaven already, Rousseau! Faith, I never knew what you did to deserve it.

* For these modest sentiments see Rousseau's Letters.

ROUSSEAU.

If mankind would not be happy, would not be wise, was it my fault? Have not I shewed them how to be happy and virtuous? And depraved as mankind are, I surely shall have some disciples in the latest ages.

VOLTAIRE.

No doubt your principles are well calculated to make men happy; witness the blessed effects they had on your own sweet contented temper.

ROUSSEAU.

WHAT are your disciples! The burlesquers of Virtue and every thing serious. How absurd are your pretences to piety towards the Divinity! One may safely despise the idea which different superstitions

superstitions give of him : but to pour
ridicule on him in an abstracted philo-
sophical light, as you have done in your
CANDIDE, what impiety ! But I see
your looks anticipate your punishment,
while yonder comes an angel for me.

VOLTAIRE.

His looks, indeed, pronounce him
from heaven : but it is the soul of So-
crates, and his eye is on me. Divine
Socrates ! thou who broughtest Philoso-
phy from heaven to dwell with men,
hast thou come to conduct me thither ?

SOCRATES.

VOLTAIRE, that is not my office.
A few hours for recollection is permit-
ted to the soul after it leaves the body ere
it is brought before the Judge, and
sometimes it is allowed a much longer

abode in this region of unjudged spirits. During this interval the Dead are often allowed the conversation of one another. This is now your situation. Concern for my brethren of mankind still actuates my thoughts, and I am partly acquainted with the present state of Philosophy in the world. Many things in it amaze me; and it is by a singular privilege that I am permitted to have an hour's conversation with you, you who have been a leader in modern Philosophy, that, if possible, I may learn to account for what now astonishes me.

VOLTAIRE.

HAPPY fate, that I have so soon met the godlike Socrates! But to fit me for confabulation, ease my mind at once,
and

and tell me your opinion of the Christian superstition.—Speak, is it not such?

SOCRATES.

To tell you what I know for certain I am not permitted. My desire was to talk with you as a Philosopher, and that desire was granted, but no more. Answer me, I conjure you, without gloss or digression.

I AM often at a loss to conceive the nature of your modern Philosophy. When Locke was upon his death-bed, he wrote to Collins, “ This life affords
“ no solid satisfaction but the consci-
“ ousness of doing well, and the hope
“ of another.” My Philosophy has been long admired, and this sentence is the very essence of it; yet, amazing to me! this sentence of Locke has been treated

with all the contempt of ridicule, and pronounced unworthy of a Philosopher by one * who generally speaks the sense of your party. Explain to me how is the hope of another life unworthy of a Philosopher ?

VOLTAIRE.

THE Philosopher scorns to be duped either by the fears, or the hopes of superstition. He professes the noblest freedom of enquiry ; and it is unworthy of him to assent by guess. He demands demonstration.

SOCRATES.

THE metaphysical doctrines of an after-life and a Providence are incapable of absolute demonstration.

* Dr. Middleton.

VOLTAIRE.

THE Philosopher is at least a sceptic on these points. He builds his happiness on a surer foundation.

SOCRATES.

ON what foundation?

VOLTAIRE.

As the calamities of life are above his controul, his first care is to arm himself with a fortitude above being concerned at whatever may happen; and hence his happiness.

SOCRATES.

TELL me, how would he behave were his dearest friend, the brother of his soul, suddenly to fall dead at his feet?

VOLTAIRE.

He may wish it had been otherwise; but as sorrow will not restore his friend
to

to life, he will look on it as an accident which he ought to have expected, and will indulge himself in no further grief.

S O C R A T E S.

FROM hence I perceive, that his fortitude is built on the extinction of the human passions; and that the happiness it acquires, is an ungenerous indifference. Well, but suppose our Philosopher on his own death-bed, what are his feelings when Death's cold hand is upon him ?

V O L T A I R E.

WITH the most perfect tranquillity he knows he must die, his elements must resolve into their kinds *, and he

* Such were the pretences of Toland.

complains

complains no more of it than a tree does of being cut down.

SOCRATES.

HAS your Philosopher any religion?

VOLTAIRE.

YES, the noblest. He adores the Supreme —

SOCRATES.

HOLD—I know your flourishes; but before I can admire his piety, I must be convinced of what he expects and believes. The belief of an invisible agency wants proof sufficient for him, and the hopes and dread of futurity are unworthy of your Philosopher. For what then does he adore the Supreme?

VOLTAIRE.

FOR the wonders of this glorious Universe—he worships almighty Nature.

SOCRA-

SOCRATES.

IN other words, he admires * a certain wonderful Power, that by a kind of fatality made and supports the universe, but which has no intelligence of the moral world. Now what influence has this religion on his conduct?

VOLTAIRE.

THE idea of beauty † cheers his soul, and confirms him in his favourite fortitude.

SOCRATES.

WOULD it support him in severe distress? Suppose your Philosopher re-

* This is a fair account of Shaftesbury's turgid apostrophe to the Creator or Nature, which, according to Newton's sentiments, is mere Atheism, *Veneramur autem et colimus ob dominium. Deus enim sine dominio, providentiâ, et causis finalibus, nihil aliud est quam fatum et natura.* Princip. Schol. Gen. sub finem.

† Shaftesbury almost passim.

duced

duced from affluence and health to the lowest poverty and the severest pangs of disease.

VOLTAIRE.

HE would esteem it as unavoidable fate, and nobly would—

SOCRATES.

HOLD—I can bear you no longer.—
When one is wounded in the tenderest part, on the death of a beloved friend, human Nature must feel, and bleeding Friendship will anxiously enquire, “Where is now the partner of my soul?” And if the belief can in thought follow the deceased to a state of happy existence, the anguish which Nature stirs in the bosom will then, and then only, feel the relief adapted to its pain. A ray of pensive complacency

gency beams across the mind, which now, arguing on its own feelings, builds a system of divine Philosophy on these inclinations which it finds interwoven with the soul ; and looking forward to its own departure from the body, encourages the joyful hope, so dear, so acceptable to Nature, of yet again meeting its absent companion, never more to be divided by accident or Death.

ON the other hand, your Philosopher's whole sum of perfection consists in a total indifference to the accidents of life, in doing unhallowed violence to his own feelings, and in stifling the affections and workings of Nature. His mind wraps itself up in an apathy, gloomy, hopeless and ungenerous, the tranquillity of a brute.

a brute. Nor is he less unamiable in the indifference with which he would fortify himself against the approaches of his own death. Every hope and fear of futurity which Nature whispers to the soul, he rejects as deficient in proof, and unworthy of a Philosopher: but that fortitude, brutal as it is, which he boasts to have acquired, is now found a delusion. It was his principal care to extinguish and root out the affections and workings of Nature in pursuit of a fortitude, which not being founded on the hopes and feelings of Nature, is in the hour of distress unattainable. In the days of health and joy he may think he has attained it; and though he may have rendered his heart callous at the death of a friend, yet at the approach
of

of his own, unless he is absorbed in an unthinking stupidity, injured Nature will then plead her own cause, and painfully convince him, that she cannot repose herself in the hopeless indifference and apathy of Philosophy. Nor in death only does injured Nature assert her claim to be heard : in the horrors of poverty and in the torture of disease she will seek relief ; and in that breast where justice has been taught to hope no future reward, and villany to fear no transmundane punishment, the consequence is certain ; Nature will be heard. In the one case, fraud will ensue ; and in the other, the only refuge of your Philosopher is self-murder, an exit truly worthy of so detestable a character. Nor is it only injured Nature that will in these cases

cases compel your Philosopher to these reliefs; his own Philosophy also leads him to them. On his own principles, in these extremes, it is his duty to do so; for on his principles it can never be proved a duty to suffer, nor a vice to catch at the relief that can avoid detection.

SUCH, Voltaire, is the idea of modern Philosophy I have been able to collect from yours, from Bolingbroke's, and the writings of your other friends. The fortitude it would attain is exactly the unnatural apathy of the Stoicks; but giving up the hopes of immortality which that sect indulged, it has destroyed the best, the only motives of virtue, and therefore has no claim to that love of it, for which the disciples of Zeno were justly honoured.

C

BUT

BUT you and your friends have sometimes talked of immortality.—I know your writings are strangely contradictory ; but will a good sentiment in one page, prove that you have not a bad one in the next? I know your modern Philosophers have a method, which would have been despised by antiquity : After building your systems with the utmost care, you throw in a few sentences of a contrary tendency ; and to these you loudly and absurdly appeal as your true meaning, when the horrid consequences of your systems are objected to you. Justly, O Rousseau, have you represented the moderns as forming a self-contradictory monster, a fiend destructive to every generous feeling, to every virtue, and which they dignify with the name of Philosophy.

ROUS-

ROUSSEAU.

GODLIKE Socrates, turn not away—

SOCRATES.

My pity for the hopeless state of Philosophy affects me with melancholy; I hasten away, to shake it off in the regions of the Blessed. [*Ex. Soc.*]

ROUSSEAU.

SOCRATES, alas! has left us. Two other spirits draw near. Anxiety casts a gloom over their piercing eyes.—

Enter JULIAN *and* PORPHYRY.

VOLTAIRE.

By some faculty yet nameless to me, I know you, illustrious Emperor! Modern times have done justice to your virtues, and have rescued your character from the aspersions of the Galileans.

C 2

JULIAN.

JULIAN.

BELoved Voltaire—but what have you done? Have you disproved the account of my being grossly addicted to forcery and divination?

VOLTAIRE.

No.

JULIAN.

HAVE you removed the disgrace of my unfairness in prohibiting the children of Christians to learn to read, or to study the liberal arts?

VOLTAIRE.

No — but our age despises Nazianzen's account of your death, and gives entire credit to that of Ammianus Marcellinus.

JULIAN.

I THANK your age for its indulgent bias. But how stands the controversy

verſy againſt the Galileans? I hope gloriously: many of our friends daily paſs this way.

VOLTAIRE.

INDULGE me firſt, illuſtrious Julian.—Was you rewarded or puniſhed for your attacks on Nazaritiſm?

JULIAN.

NEITHER as yet. We are ſtill in great uncertainty of its truth or falſity, and are deeply concerned in the iſſue. Porphyry, Celfus, and many more of us have yonder region appointed for our reſidence. If the Nazarene was an Impoſtor, the Gods are indebted to us, and we have crowns in reſerve. If he was not an Impoſtor—

PORPHYRY.

ENOUGH, O Julian.—The purpoſe of our meeting Voltaire was to learn
C 3 with

with what new weapons Christianity is now attacked. The weapons, we are told, are almost totally changed since our days.

VOLTAIRE.

Yes, and it was high time to change them; I wish your weapons had never been used. Christianity now boasts of your attacks as one of its cardinal proofs.

JULIAN.

In what instances?

VOLTAIRE.

You have confessed that the Galilean and the fisherman Peter wrought many miracles, and have absurdly ascribed them to magic.

PORPHYRY.

To deny the miracles was in our days impossible: the testimony of them

on

on every hand bore us down. Magic was in our days believed in, and to that we ascribed the miracles which ourselves were convinced had happened.

VOLTAIRE.

AND magic being now universally discredited, you are become witnesses to Christianity.

JULIAN.

BUT how does modern Philosophy manage this part of the argument?

VOLTAIRE.

WE assert, that a miracle never was, or can be wrought.

JULIAN.

WHAT! has the Deity no power to work a miracle? or are there no circumstances in which it would become

his goodness, as Governor of the world,
to give one?

VOLTAIRE.

WE sometimes wave the argument,
and sometimes deny both.

JULIAN.

WELL, if these weapons succeed,
the world is but little improved in wisdom
since our days.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT we assert, besides, that a miracle
is incapable of proof.

"What can we reason but from what we know?"

And we have no * Experience of miracles
being wrought.

PORPHYRY.

BUT by what miracle was it that so
many people imagined they saw Jesus
do miracles?

* This is H——'s principal argument.

ROUS-

ROUSSEAU.

ALLOW me a moment. — I myself have done * such seeming miracles as astonished a whole country-fair. Had I lived among the old Hebrews, I could have exceeded Elijah, or any of their prophets.

JULIAN.

THE inference you would draw may do well enough where people do not compare and examine: but will a fellow's swallowing fire, and spueing needles and ribbands, lighting a candle with the point of a knife, and making a walking-stick dance; such miracles as you, Rousseau, boast to have performed;

* See Rousseau's Third Letter from the Mountains.

will

will these bear a comparison with the Galilean's giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead to life? I lose patience with you—our cause is injured by your nonsense.

PORPHYRY.

VOLTAIRE, your answer to my question. By what miracle did so many people imagine they saw the miracles of Christ?

VOLTAIRE.

To be deceived is no uncommon thing.

PORPHYRY.

BUT it was impossible the Apostles could be deceived in the many instances, whether a man was a leper or lame, or whether he was next moment cured

cured and restored to strength and activity.

ROUSSEAU.

BUT I have proved that it requires a perfect knowledge in Nature, such as perhaps was never attained, before one can pronounce that what astonishes us is truly a miracle.

JULIAN.

YOUR head must have been full of the tricks of a juggler when you said so. It indeed requires knowledge in Natural Philosophy to know whether lighting a candle with the point of a knife, and the other chymical feats you have mentioned, be trick or miracle: but nothing is more inapplicable to the case of the Apostles; they were perfectly judges of almost every miracle they

they saw, which were an appeal to the senses of the plainest man; and till the world can discover some property in Nature that will give instant sight to the blind and life to the dead, to talk of the little tricks of chymistry in comparison of the miracles of Jesus, is equally childish and impertinent.

PORPHYRY.

VOLTAIRE, your further answer to my question.

VOLTAIRE.

INTERESTED views, such as to head a party, have produced many bold assertions.

PORPHYRY.

Yes, but the design of the false assertor is to obtain some advantages, which must appear to him by that means

means attainable, when he hazards the false assertion : but it is hard to prove that any worldly advantage could appear attainable to the Apostles. On the contrary, torture and death was every day the consequence of publishing their assertions ; and these consequences were often expressly foretold by their Master. Human Nature cannot act without motive, and the Apostles must have had some advantage in view : but it is hard to prove on the principles of human action what that advantage was, unless it consisted of a hope in the favour of the Deity, a hope intirely incompatible with a conscience of their own fraud. That they believed their own assertions, they gave the greatest proofs that men could give. They braved
every

every thing dreadful to human nature in prosecuting their desire to communicate to mankind, what they esteemed a blessing to themselves. How, I say, do you account for this greatest of all miracles, that so many men so firmly believed they saw the miracles of Jesus?

VOLTAIRE.

WHEN we are hard urged by our adversaries, we tell them plainly, that if the whole * English nation had asserted that Queen Elizabeth had returned to life after being dead and buried, we were resolved not to believe it.

JULIAN.

A HAPPY argument truly! to shift the supposition from a case which carries the appearance of the greatest

* H——'s Essay on Miracles.

bene-

benevolence of the Deity, to a case that could have no utility in it at all.

VOLTAIRE.

SHAFTESBURY, a Philosopher who would have reflected honour on the Porch, Shaftesbury generously gives up the evidence of miracle, because, says he, every Religion lays claim to it.

JULIAN.

SHAFTESBURY is very obliging. But will Reason demand this concession?

VOLTAIRE.

My Philosophy of History will not only shew the reasonableness, but the necessity of the concession.

JULIAN.

JULIAN.

Your Philosophy of Romance, you should have said.

—*Quicquid Grecia mendax
Audet in historia*—

and even Varillas are nothing to you.

PORPHYRY.

AN unhappy truth has slipped from our ingenious friend Middleton. If there had never been a true miracle, the world, says he, had never heard so many stories of false ones. Base coin is a sure proof that there is such a thing as the sterling; and if the Christians would take the advice * of their Master, and judge of opinions as carefully as bankers distinguish the good

* *Τίνεσθε δόκιμοι τραπεζίται, τὰ μὲν ἀποδο-
κιμάζοντες, τὸ δὲ καλὸν κατέχοντες.* A saying
of Christ preserved by Origen.

coin

coin from the bad, in place of giving up the evidence of miracles, because every Religion pretends to it, they might from that circumstance, from a comparative view of their own miracles and those of others, produce such arguments as would stagger the best wits of our party.

JULIAN.

How ridiculous did the Pagans of antiquity appear, when they compared the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus with those of the Galilean!

ROUSSEAU.

THE miracles of Apollonius cannot fall under the censure you have passed on mine. They were no chymical tricks: he cured the blind—he raised the dead——

D

POR.

P O R P H Y R Y.

So Philostratus, his historian, says,
 But who told him so? Severus's wife
 told him, he informs his reader; and
 she lived about one hundred years after
 Apollonius was dead. Besides, this
 writer's design is too thin to escape un-
 detected: the miracles he ascribes to his
 hero are evidently copied from those
 of the Gospel; so evident, that he has
 even * used the words of Luke. But
 if Philostratus was willing to supply
 the Pagan disputants with a set of mi-
 racles as wonderful as those of the
 Christians, Apollonius's other historian,
 Maragenes, who wrote long before
 Philostratus, had no such design; for
 he makes his hero no more than a

* Bishop Huet.

mere Juggler, another Alexander of Pontus.

ROUSSEAU.

BUT if the miracle-workers of Pagan antiquity were no better than a sett of gypsies, modern times can produce miracles of the most astonishing kind, and attested with all the authority of witnesses, but which in the end only proved the insufficiency of human evidence on the subject.

JULIAN.

CELSUS, a few days ago, repeated with great pleasure some sentences, to this purpose, from a living Philosopher; sentences full of the most confident triumph over every pretence to miracle. You, Porphyry, was with him; but I was so deeply engaged in

a dispute with the testy Jerome, that I could not then attend to, nor partake of, your joy.

PORPHYRY.

You would have found little cause of joy:—you would have been amazed at the falsehood and impudence of these triumphant assertions.

JULIAN.

Be particular.

PORPHYRY.

THEY are from the same Philosopher who so ingeniously supposes the resurrection of queen Elizabeth. After having denied the possibility of miracles, he proceeds to some instances of pretended ones, wrought in the present age, in the midst of Paris, and attested,

attested, he says, in the strongest manner: so strongly, that nothing but the utter impossibility of every miracle can invalidate their proof. "The Jesuits," he says, "a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions in whose favour the miracles are said to have been wrought, were never able distinctly to refute or detect them*."

VOLTAIRE.

A BOLD assertion!

PORPHYRY.

BUT even falser than bold. Fraud and imposture were in several, in many instances, fully and distinctly † de-

* H——'s Essay on Miracles.

† In the cases of *Jaques Laurent Menedrieux*, *Jean Nivet*, *Laleu*, *Anne Coulon*, *Anne le Franc*, and many others.

D 3

tested,

tested ; and in some, even by the confession of the parties * themselves, who were said to be cured by the Abbé de Paris.

JULIAN.

To vapour away that they were never refuted, is a kind of literary felony; and dares a modern Philosopher thus to abuse the publick whom he pretends to instruct!

PORPHYRY.

WITH the utmost insult of triumph our Philosopher † advises the Christians, that “ if they be wise, they had
“ better adopt the miracles of the
“ Abbé de Paris ; as being more worthy a thousand times, than all the
“ rest of their collection.”

WHAT delirium is this!

* The *Sieur le Doulx*, the widow *de Lorme*, &c.

† Essay on Miracles.

VOLTAIRE.

ARE not you too vehement, good Porphyry? This acute Philosopher merits no such contempt as you would pour upon him.

PORPHYRY.

HAVE patience.—Elated with joy, Celfus and I heard his triumph over the pretences to miracle; and wishful to be convinced of the justice of it, we consulted the Archbishop of *Sens* and *M. de Montgeron*, the two best masters of the subject of the Abbé de Paris?—But alas! our joy was soon succeeded with indignation against the Bigot, who had deceived us with vain hope.

VOLTAIRE.

MR. H—— a Bigot!

PORPHYRY.

WHAT other excuse can you leave him? Nothing but the enthusiasm of Bigotry could have betrayed him into such glaring absurdities. The Archbishop of *Sens* has proved that many of the Abbé's pretended miracles were fully detected and refuted; and *Montgeron*, the zealous devotee of the Abbé, in his eight instances of cures, has given the clearest proof that they cannot even bear a comparison with the miracles recorded in the *Evangile*. In these the cure was instant; the Lame leapt, the Blind saw, and the Dead arose, instant as the flash of the lightning, at the word of the Galilean. In the despicable miracles of the Abbé de Paris, how different! *Montgeron*,

geron, his fanatic admirer, has told us, that not only days, but weeks, nay months intervened between the first application and the relief received. Multitudes received no benefit ; and those who did, used medicines, and the cure was imperfect. This *Montgeron* fairly acknowledges : and his account of the facts has convinced me, that the cure of those who did receive a partial benefit at the Tomb of the Saint, can be fairly accounted for by natural causes*.—Alas! how unworthy of a Scholar and a Philosopher is it even to mention the miracles of the Abbé de Paris, in comparison with those ascribed to the Nazarene ! And

* See a plain sensible treatise called the *Criterion*, or *Miracles examined*.

what

what blindness of bigotry to prefer them to those, or to think that such preference will escape its deserved contempt!

JULIAN.

BUT how were our cause bettered, if the miracles of the Abbé were really as strongly authenticated as this modern assures us they are.

PORPHYRY.

IT were every thing for us. Here are miracles most strongly authenticated; and yet all the world knows, that an order from the king of France, had a wall built round the tomb of the Saint, put a final close to the imposture; and our Philosopher has given the hint, that had the *inferior* miracles of the

the Gospel met for proper a check, the world would never more have heard of them.

JULIAN.

AMAZING indeed! Can we charge this Philosopher with ignorance? Has he read?

PORPHYRY.

He has.

JULIAN.

SUCH misrepresentation then must stand to a worse account than that of ignorance. The bars and walls of prisons, and all the threatening decrees of Princes, ay, and the execution of their severest threats, could not impede the miracles of the Gospel.—My soul trembles at the thought—I myself

self, the master of the world, could not falsify the Predictions of the Galilean, could not rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem *.

PORPHYRY.

ENOUGH—with what other weapons do you attack Christianity?

VOLTAIRE.

WE have one with a million of edges; our Criticism; by which we expose any particular passage we please, of the Volume which the superstitious receive as the book of God.

* See Warburton's treatise on Julian's arts, where this event is proved by every criterion of historical certainty.

JU-

JULIAN.

A PRETTY device to blind the multitude ! But the information, O Voltaire, which will give us joy, is to acquaint us of any argument against Christianity that has Truth and true Philosophy on its side. Common honesty and candour will demand a fair trial to the books held sacred ; and to a fair trial their advocates have always triumphantly appealed. Porphyry did no good to our cause, when he challenged the antiquity of the book of Daniel.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT if Porphyry had proved that the most antient Hebrew stories were evidently fictions borrowed from the fables

fables of the Greeks, he would have done something.

PORPHYRY.

AH, had it been so !

VOLTAIRE.

A CERTAIN proof in one instance is a presumption for the rest. Thus the Hebrew historian who sends his hero to consult a Pythonefs, (we have the very word in the text) a Priestess of Apollo, gives a certain proof from whence he is spinning his fable ; and from thence we conclude, that the other stories of Samson, and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, were borrowed from the fables of Hercules and the daughter of Agamemnon.

P. O. R.

P O R P H Y R Y.

ALAS, Voltaire, your argument falls to the ground ! There is no such word as *Pythones* in the Hebrew volume. Your joy on finding that word in the Vulgate or Septuagint has hurried you on, and you have given the Christians a triumph over your malice.

V O L T A I R E.

BUT M. Freret * has done greatly : he levels the whole fabrick at once. The New Testament is all a forgery, he says, contrived about Constantine's time, never once mentioned by the first Christian writers.

J U L I A N.

AMAZING falsehood ! — I myself have given testimony to some of its

* Secretary to the Society at Berlin.

books

books being written by the Apostles * ; Its forgery in my Uncle's age had never escaped undetected by me, who must have been in the secret, from my connections with the leaders † of the Church. Long ere Constantine lived, it was a thousand times cited, as the rule of Faith, by the earliest Fathers. I had lately a long discourse with Lardner: § the authorities he has produced reflect disgrace on Freret.

* St. John in particular.

† He had received Deacon's orders, and had been pupil to some of the most eminent Fathers of his age.

§ Besides Lardner, Whitby, Jortin, Fillemont, Le Clerc, and Lipsienfis, have put this subject beyond all possibility of doubt; the latter of whom treats the arguments lately adopted by Freret as the most illiterate of all cavils.

PORPHYRY.

INDIGNATION fires me.—Our cause is ruined in the hands of blockheads. But what other arguments do you bring against Christianity?

VOLTAIRE.

WE have a thousand philosophical arguments: the principal one, that the immortality it proudly boasts to have brought to light is all a delusion.

PORPHYRY.

IMMORTALITY is the wish of Nature; a wish that will always be dear to the virtuous bosom. It is the triumph of Nazaritism to drive its opponents to a system against Virtue and Nature.

E

JULIAN.

JULIAN.

BUT what proof do you offer for
your favourite doctrine, the mortality
of the mind ?

VOLTAIRE.

OUR modern Cæsar asserts, (and the
great Shaftesbury said it before him)
that as men did not think before they
were born, they will therefore cease to
think after death *

PORPHYRY.

Oh excellent ! A creature cannot be
immortal for this good reason, just

• De l'avenir, cher Keith, jougeons par la paise,
Comment avant que je fusse, il n'avoit point pensé,
De même après ma mort, quand toutes mes parties
Par la corruption seront anéanties,
Par un même diſſen il ne pensera plus.

Roi de Prusse.

because

because he is a creature, because he did not always exist. Shame on your modern Philosophy! it begins with demanding demonstration for every thing it is willing to oppose, and ends with supporting its own scheme with nothing better than a round assertion.

JULIAN.

YET immortality has all the proof that the limits of human knowledge can receive; to ask actual demonstration for it is to require organs which Nature has not bestowed on men. You moderns have betrayed our cause.

VOLTAIRE.

AND Christianity triumphs in the objections of antiquity. It was not adapted to human Nature, you said, be-

cause it forbad revenge and whoredom.
To be sure, a Pythagorean, with his
beans, were a fit person to refute the
Mosaic account of the Creation !

PORPHYRY.

WHAT do you mean, Voltaire ?

VOLTAIRE.

HAVE you forgot what you say in
your Life of Pythagoras, that at the first
formation of things men and beans
sprung up together ? And you very
gravely add, that take a little bit of bean-
blossom when growing black, and bury
it in the earth for ninety days, and
then dig up the place, and you will find
instead of the blossom either a child's
head formed, or *γυναικε αιδειον*. He
that was capable of talking at this rate
ought

ought not to ridicule modern Philosophy.

PORPHYRY.

Does an absurdity of mine render one of yours less ridiculous? The ancients who attacked Christianity, believed in the immortality of the soul. That doctrine is now wholly in the possession of Christianity: and have not you thus yielded the palm?

VOLTAIRE.

WELL; but what argument would most effectually refute Revelation?

PORPHYRY.

I CAN give you some description of the argument that would do it. Christianity addresses itself to the feelings, the fears, and wishes of the human

heart. Now when the world can produce a system that will lay a stronger hold on these, that will give piety a sublimer hope, that will give to vice greater fears, and to true penitence sweeter consolations *; then, and then only, will Christianity be rationally and effectually refuted. The prophecy of Montesquieu, that Christianity would not stand its ground above other two hundred years, diffused joy through our mansions; but I now fear the completion will never take place. Either better arguments must be discovered, or, what indeed seems already to be far advanced, a want of honesty in making enquiry, and a superficial dabbling and trifling in Phi-

* Lord L——n's Dialogues of the Dead.

losophy must take entire possession of the human mind : in either of these cases, but in no other, the prophecy may be fulfilled. The latter would prove no alleviation to us ; and of the former, alas ! I greatly despair.

JULIAN.

OH Porphyry, we have little comfort in what modern wit has been able to do for our cause. Farewel for a while, Voltaire ; I suppose you will soon join our company. Lucian, whose Christianity and wit were not unlike your own, longs to see you.

PORPHYRY.

SOME further conversation with Rousseau is desirable. Yonder approaches the soul of a celebrated

Monk: it is Voltaire he desires to converse with; let us retire and leave them to themselves.

[*Ex.* Jul. Por. and Rouss.]

Enter ST. AUGUSTINE.

AUGUSTINE.

RETURNING from a visit of benevolence to unhappy Afric, I heard that Voltaire had lately passed the gates of death. Desirous of some conversation with him, I have come hither; nor is my search in vain. Voltaire, I know you.

VOLTAIRE.

AND by a power yet unknown to me, I know St. Augustine. You seem happy: perhaps the remembrance of your gallantries yet pleases you. Or
do

do you still retain the visionary enthusiasm of your dotage?

AUGUSTINE.

VOLTAIRE, you have happily begun on the subject I desired. It is granted to the inhabitants of the regions where I reside, to know what opinions prevail among men. You have now mentioned my debaucheries with triumph, and my piety with contempt: this is exactly the treatment which the Fathers receive from the modern pretenders to Philosophy. And let me tell you, that the ridiculous light in which you place the Christian Fathers when compared with the Pagan Philosophers, does little credit to the wisdom or honesty of your age.

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

WHAT; is not the silly credulity and prejudices of the Fathers truly absurd? Are not your own numerous complaints of the Devil's busying himself to tempt you to the violation of your valuable chastity, truly ridiculous?

AUGUSTINE.

I HAD both my faults and my foibles. You tax me with prejudice; there is nothing indeed more unworthy of a Philosopher; yet your modern ones are the very slaves of it. Voltaire himself was shackled and blinded with it. What but the most jaundice-eyed prejudice, on the comparative view of the Pagan and Christian Philosophers, could express the highest

highest admiration of the one, and the deepest contempt of the other!

VOLTAIRE.

THE Fathers, indeed, justly excite our contempt; but I know no bias we have discovered against them.

AUGUSTINE.

You avow your contempt of them, and many others do the same, who know nothing about them. To despise them is the mode; and one fool echoes it to another. However, one of the finest scholars of modern times, the accomplished Erasmus, was not blind to their merit. The liberal mind and fine genius of an Origen, the elegance of a Lactantius or a Basil, and the amazing erudition of a Jerome, were not overlooked by him. But let

us enter on a comparison between the Fathers and Philosophers. Let us pitch on the Philosopher and Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, a character which modern times talk of with the highest admiration.

VOLTAIRE.

To the honour of modern times be it remembered.

AUGUSTINE.

AURELIUS had a good heart, and his soul was formed for the love of virtue ; but he had his weaknesses ; foibles, that had he distinguished himself as a Christian, would have furnished such a fund of ridicule to the Lucians and Voltaires, that his character would have been one of the most contemptible on human record.

VOL.

VOLTAIRE.

HA ! how do you prove this ?

AUGUSTINE.

It only requires the wit of a Voltaire to do it. For example, to begin with his political conduct : What more unworthy of a supreme magistrate than that pedantry of benevolence with which he treated the first information of the revolt of Cassius ? Lucius Verus, his colleague in empire, gave him the strongest assurances of it ; but Aurelius was so good-natured, he would not believe a word of it ; and thus by his ill timed humanity gave the villain Cassius every opportunity to carry on his designs. He was proclaimed Emperor in the East, and to crush his rebellion cost no more than the lives
of

of some thousands of the harmless subjects.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT what sovereign ever equalled him as a Philosopher?

AUGUSTINE.

I WILL by no means slip over his writings. His writings ! might a Voltaire say : what are they ? What is easier than to string together a parcel of moral sentences which the Stoics were taught to chyme over, and which before him had been thrummed over and over by Arianus and twenty more. As to his Philosophy, what is it ? He talks of the soul, and of God ; but the one may be mortal for what he knew, and the other he fairly reckons material : and to this his Supreme, he added
an

an infinite fry of lesser gods, to whose idols he was continually burning sacrifice. On the *dies nefasti*, when public sacrifices were prohibited, every corner of his house smoked with incense to his *lares* and *penates*. Nay, our admirable Philosopher imagined he could make gods; and strange sort of stuff he chose to make them of. L. Verus, his son-in-law and colleague in the empire, was one of the most profligate characters in the Pagan world. Even the dissolute inhabitants of Daphne were astonished at the revels of his lewdness. His wife's mother, the Empress Faustina, and his own sister Fabia, were his whores; and poison administered by his spouse Lucilla, our Philosopher's daughter, put an end to his infamous life. Yet of this wretch
must

must the cuckold Antoninus make a god ; and the Roman senate must assist at his Apotheosis. Faustina, our Philosopher's wife, the abandoned Faustina, whose adulteries were the jest of the Theatre, must also be a goddess ; and the youths and the virgins of Rome must invoke her shrine at the celebration of the nuptial rite. How ridiculous, how contemptible are this man's ideas of the Object of divine worship ! For me to call his piety mere Atheism, you might brand as the prejudice of a monk ; but I trust, a Philosopher, of your own complexion will have some weight with you. * “ The Pagan worshippers, says he, these pretended religionists, are really a kind of superstitious Atheists, and acknowledge no
 * H——'s Natural History of Religion.
 “ being

" being that corresponds to our idea of a
 " Deity, (he should have added, which
 we have been taught by Revelation)
 " no first principle of mind or thought."
 Nay he adds, " The religion of Mar-
 " cus Aurelius and Plutarch is not
 " worthy of the honourable denomi-
 " nation of Theism : the creed of these
 " Philosophers may be justly said to
 " exclude a Deity, and to leave only
 " angels and fairies." For shame! let
 us hear no more of the divine Aure-
 lius.

VOLTAIRE.

HOWEVER he may have failed in
 the abstruser paths of metaphysics,
 his equanimity and clemency were
 truly divine.

F A U

AUGUSTINE.

So gross were his conceptions of the object of worship, they are a disgrace to the name of Man. But this is the abstruse path of metaphysics : Alas, what will not prejudice say ! His equanimity was indeed admirable ; and let him enjoy the praise of it. But had he persecuted any sect of Philosophers as he persecuted the Christians, every babe would have been taught to lip his name with detestation.

VOLTAIRE.

THE Christians were represented to him as guilty of the worst crimes.

AUGUSTINE.

VERY true. But these accusations were fully answered by the apologies of
of

of Justin, of the Philosopher Athenagoras, of the elegant Melito, and Apollinaris, who prayed and intreated him to be convinced by examination of the innocence of the Christians. But he was convinced of their guilt in one particular: They reviled his rabble of gods; and to appease these, the Empire from Asia to Gaul smoaked with the blood of Christians. I burn with indignation. I think I see the good old Polycarp, the most unblemished character, the worshipper of the Eternal Infinite Mind, accused of Atheism by the most groveling Atheists; and because he will not worship and sacrifice to the statue of our philosophical Emperor, condemned to the flames. Had he been an Indian Philosopher who thus opposed the be-

setted superstition of an Alexander, how glorious would his name have been among men ! But Polycarp was a Christian ; and Prejudice will allow him no honour.

VOLTAIRE.

YET still misinformation may be pleaded in excuse of the Emperor.

AUGUSTINE.

The Emperor himself esteemed it as the greatest disgrace to a Philosopher not to be duly informed ; and he had every opportunity. But Crescens the Philosopher had his ear ; Crescens, a wretch addicted to the vilest lusts ; a wretch who trembled at the thoughts of Death, which as the greatest evil he procured for Justin. Let us take a comparative view of Crescens and Justin :

Justin: The one a slave to the vilest
 lusts; the other of the most innocent
 life: The one a believer in the gods of
 Paganism, or an Atheist; the other
 the worshipper of the Eternal Creator:
 The one shocked at the thought of
 death; the other esteeming his mar-
 tyrdom as the greatest bliss, and tell-
 ing the Emperor that a Christian could
 lay down his life with as much indif-
 ference as a Philosopher could put
 off his coat: In short, the one a most
 despicable, the other, with all his foi-
 bles that an invidious pen * has been
 able to collect, a most exalted cha-
 racter.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT Antoninus stopped the perse-
 cution. It was never under his own

* Middleton.

eye. The blood of a martyr was not shed within the walls of Rome during his reign *.

AUGUSTINE.

So modern prejudice has said; but it has the misfortune not to be true: † Valerianus, Peon, Hierax, Justin Martyr, and several more were beheaded in Rome by his order; their crime, Christianity. Yet after all, Voltaire, I will confess to you that Aurelius was naturally of an amiable and merciful disposition; it was the cursed effect of his abominable superstition, it was devotion to his diabolical gods that ever made him shed the blood of a Christian. Your modern Philosophers pretend to affect the utmost detestation of

* Asserted by the Daciers. † Cave.

superstition;

superstition; human record cannot afford such an example of it, as is to be found in Marcus Aurelius. See him continually on his knees to his household idols : See him on the banks of the Danube ready to join battle with the Marcomanni and Quadi, yet delaying till he fulfilled the stupid rites of superstition*; a couple of lions, with a parcel of herbs, flowers, and spices, must be thrown into the stream as a sacrifice to the god of the river. But what was the sequel? the flight of our Emperor, and twenty thousand of his soldiers left dead on the field. On another time, when pestilence raged in every

* Which were prescribed by Alexander of Pontus, a miracle-monger, whose name is transmitted to posterity, with deserved infamy, by Lucian.

city, and the Barbarians were ready to ravage the empire, behold the contemptible superstition of Antoninus. Left some rites that were pleasing to the gods should be omitted, he brought priests and sacrificers from all parts, with their whole trumpery of rites : The ceremonies of Isis, which had been prohibited by Augustus, were re-established ; “ and he made no scruple to adore a “ goddess, that had her temple destroyed in the reign of Tiberius, “ her ornaments burnt, her priests “ murdered, and her image thrown “ into the Tiber*.” And so many were the victims slain on this occasion, that even the heathens jested on him, and said that if he returned victorious there would not be an ox left in the empire.

* Casaubon,

Is

Is our Philosopher, who had no better idea of invoking the Deity than by recourse to every barbarous rite, lest the beloved one should be omitted ; is he to be compared with those who are taught that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in Spirit and Truth ? Let us hear a Plutarch cursing his gods, cursing the Divine Providence on the death of his son. Let us hear the meanest Christian in the same affliction : He does not mourn as without hope ; nay, soon as the pang of nature has subsided, joy takes place ; for he believes, that blessed are the dead which die in their Redeemer. What more exalted idea of God and immortality can the human mind conceive, than is possessed by the Christian ? and what more despicable than the Atheism and base superstition

perstition of the Philosopher? Yet the modern Free-thinker views the Pagan not only with the greatest tenderness, but with admiration; while the divine philosophy of the Christian entirely escapes his eye; and dwelling with triumph on the human weaknesses that adhere to the characters of the Fathers, he conceives the utmost contempt of these venerable names; and thus, winking against the light, our pretended Free-thinker, our modern Philosopher, becomes the veriest dupe and slave of prejudice.

Often, Voltaire, have you been merry with my weaknesses, and have called my piety superstition; and often have you called Antoninus divine. Had I ever been so blinded with prejudice as this, the thought of it even now would
sink

sink me down. You are silent. Let us look round us in this region of unjudged spirits. Yonder in keen debate are the manes of some Rabbins, some zealous Mussulmans, and some Gentoos and Bramins.

VOLTAIRE.

QUARRELLING whose religion was the best, I suppose.

AUGUSTINE.

A conscious triumph in your own superiority sparkles in your eyes, and your heart congratulates itself on the absurdity of the different dogmas of Religion. Let us indulge your desire, and go to join them.

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

A CHRISTIAN father with his pious
frauds, his miracles and holy relicks,
will complete the groupe.

AUGUSTINE.

WITH the addition of a modern
Philosopher.

VOLTAIRE.

If I am not mistaken, this is the
shade of a modern Greek : Let me ask
him a few questions. What Religion
did you profess, my friend?

GREEK.

WHEN * our little island of Samos
belonged to the Greeks, I remember

* For this and the following see Voltaire's
Dictionnaire Philosophique.

our

our priest ordered me to believe that *Agion pneuma* proceeded only from *Tou patrou*. When the Venetians took possession of our isle, our new Italian curate ordered me to say, that *Agion pneuma* proceeded both from *Tou patrou* and *Tou you*. And when the Turks came, we were ordered to cry out as loud as we could, *Allab illa Allab*. For my part, I knew not at last what Religion I was of; but I loved God with all my heart, and sold my goods very reasonably.

VOLTAIRE

AND here comes an Arabian: Let me ask him a question. What profession did you follow, my good friend?

A R A-

ARABIAN.

I TAUGHT Arithmetic, Calculation, and Astronomy.

VOLTAIRE.

AND you were a good Mussulman, I suppose?

ARABIAN.

I WAS.

VOLTAIRE.

AND though you were a good calculator, you nevertheless believed that Mohammed put one-half of the moon in his coat-sleeve.

ARABIAN.

WHAT, do you even suspect I was an Infidel!

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

No, no: I am very well pleased you should have all the faith of Abubeker. But hark ye, Augustine, does not this remind you of that blessed orthodox maxim, *Credo, quia impossibile est.*

AUGUSTINE.

YONDER Jewish Rabbin will answer you a question, or two: Do, try him, Voltaire.

VOLTAIRE.

WELL, my good Rabbin, indulge me with an answer about Adam's fall. Adam fell, you say: Come, Eleazar, how did that happen?

R A B-

RABBIN.

HAVE you never read the holy Targums and Talmuds? The Pentateuch is darkness, compared to them.

VOLTAIRE.

WELL, but how did Adam fall?

RABBIN.

* God made him exceeding glorious and great, so lofty that he could reach his hand to the moon; and he had a majestic tail, so long that he could swing it from the river Euphrates to the west of Europe. And God said in the ninety-seventh psalm, "Worship him, all ye angels." Michael and Gabriel

* For this Talmudical Legend, see Pere Calmet.

did

did so; but Sammael being terrified at the length of his tail, refused to do it; wherefore he and his angels were driven out of heaven.

VOLTAIRE.

I DID not enquire how the Devil fell.

RABBIN.

HEAR me out. Michael himself was terrified at the swinging of Adam's tail, and humbly begged God to cut it off, which he did; and Adam being spoiled of his ornament, and put to great pain, blasphemed his Maker, and therefore was driven out of Paradise; at which time God put his hand on him, and reduced him to six foot stature. Then Adam made the Thirty-

G

eighth

eighth Psalm, and said, "Thy hand
"presseth me fore."

VOLTAIRE.

O PRECIOUS Theology! But hark,
how warmly these Gentoos and Bra-
mins are arguing about the nine incar-
nations of the god Vistnou. Come,
confess, my good Saint, you have now
had time enough to see the folly and
cheat of religious legends; they are
all of a piece; it is only education and
habit that makes one appear less ri-
diculous than another; come, confess,
my good Father.

AUGUSTINE.

THIS, Voltaire, is the great argu-
ment that runs through all your writ-
ings.

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

BUT confess, I say.

AUGUSTINE.

FIRST let us hear yonder shade giving a lecture on the Newtonian Philosophy. He is just explaining Gravitation, and how by its force the planetary dance is supported, every planet a world, and every star a sun, surrounded with his planets.

VOLTAIRE.

NOW am I in heaven! O Newton, if thou wert the prophet of Divine Nature!

G 2

AU-

AUGUSTINE.

LET us also hear yonder Mussulman on the same subject. The world is supported on a great red bull's horns, he tells his audience. One of them asks him, What supports the bull? A great stone. And what supports the stone? Another great red bull. And what supports that bull? You are an impertinent fellow, says the Mussulman; and turning to others, he begins to describe the heavens. The first heaven is made of steel, says he, and the stars are pieces of crystal, that hang in golden chains from it; and there is a great cock, an hundred times bigger than mount Sinai. The next heaven is made of silver.—But enough of his nonsense. Let us hear this Chinese, and

and this Indian Philosopher. The world is not at all round, says the Chinese, as the one-ey'd * Europeans foolishly imagine; it is an immense plain, and China is placed in the middle of it.—And it stands on the back of a Tortoise, says the Indian. In short, Voltaire, we might walk for a month in these regions, where the souls which have not been judged still retain their former opinions, and still might we hear some new absurdity on cosmography, and the system of the universe. Now confess, my Philosopher, you have now seen the folly and cheat of philosophical legends; they are all of a piece, all nonsense; it is only ha-

* The Chinese have a proverb, that themselves have two eyes, the Europeans one, and all the rest of the world are blind.

bit that makes one appear less ridiculous than another.

VOLTAIRE.

By no means.—Does the story of the red bull's horns supporting the world disprove the system of gravitation?

AUGUSTINE.

Most undoubtedly it does.—Because there are a thousand absurdities about the question, all must be alike.

VOLTAIRE.

By no means.

AUGUSTINE.

INDEED! and yet this is the grand argument you have used against Christianity. Have not your writings a thousand

thousand instances represented the absurdities of various Religions, as a full proof of the absurdity of all? And why must not the same reasoning be applied to the Newtonian philosophy? Absurd indeed is such reasoning; and when thus brought to the test, you yourself are ashamed of it.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT the Newtonian Philosophy stands upon demonstration: I hope you don't think your Religion does.

AUGUSTINE.

I DO think it does, and on a much more certain and extensive one. Does design imply intelligence? and is there difference between good and evil? I ask no other data.

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

BUT some philosophers have denied both these data.

AUGUSTINE.

WE have a Bedlam in the land of spirits for these geniuses. Your Philosophers may talk of the want of proof till their lungs fail them; but there is an internal feeling in the breast of every thinking man, that in spite of his will commands him to assent to the truth of these data. The cause of Religion is indebted to a Philosopher of your own, for enforcing this argument *. And another of your own Philosophers, a most indubitable witness on that subject, has assured us,

* Lord K—s.

that

that “The most open impiety is at-
tended with a secret dread and com-
punction *,”

VOLTAIRE.

BUT how is yours comparable to the
Newtonian demonstration?

AUGUSTINE.

THERE is an argument against the
fundamental datum of Newton, infi-
nitely more subtle than what has been
advanced against the difference of good
and evil. What will become of the New-
tonian philosophy, if the reality of mo-
tion is disproved? and you know what
† Zeno had to say on that head. Nor

* H———’s Natural History of Religion.

† See Diog. Laert. in vit. Pyrrh. Ed. Cas. p.
694. ΑΛΛΑ μὴν οὐδὲ κίνησις ἐστὶ. κ. τ. λ. In Eng-
lish thus. “Neither is there motion; for the thing
have

have I heard that Zeno's argument has been mathematically refuted.

VOLTAIRE.

COMMON SENSE refutes it.

AUGUSTINE.

I AM glad of that. So all your boasted Newtonian demonstration ends in an appeal to common sense ; and common sense is very certain that design implies intelligence, and that there is a difference between good and evil. The creation implies design ; that design implies infinite wisdom and omnipotence ; these imply infinite goodness and justice ;

Oil too (true), Oil & Butter

tice; this, including the difference between good and evil, implies the doctrine of full retribution of rewards and punishments to moral agents.

VOLTAIRE.

THIS is no more than Natural Religion.

AUGUSTINE.

YOU mistake. 'Tis Revelation. 'Tis demonstrable that human reason never discovered that only basis of Religion, the idea of an Infinite Mind*, or dreamed of several of the duties of morality.

VOLTAIRE.

YOUR argument reaches but to one half of your Religion.

* Fully proved by Campbell.

A U-

AUGUSTINE.

I UNDERSTAND you: You want proof of those parts which are not reducible to Natural Religion.

VOLTAIRE.

VOLTAIRE.

I do.

AUGUSTINE.

WELL, let us view that part of Revelation called Natural Religion by itself. Its miserable deficiency demonstrates the necessity of some more: It falls far short of the wishes and anxieties of the human heart; it only faintly guesses, but gives no assurance of pardon to repenting guilt. A faint guess will never satisfy human anxiety; and an indifference fatal to morality will ensue.

-U A

ensue. Here then is demonstration that Christianity is founded on the wants of human nature, and on the interest of morality. For other parts of it we have demonstration, though not mathematical, yet equally credible.—I deny there was ever such a man as Julius Cæsar; all about him is mere fiction.

VOLTAIRE.

WHAT now! amazing!

AUGUSTINE.

COME to argument; how do you prove there was such a man?

VOLTAIRE.

By the Roman History, and the consent of mankind.

A U-

AUGUSTINE.

A FEW historians, who contradict one another at every turn, talk of such a man. The two or three original volumes that mention him, for many hundreds of years lay unknown in monasteries, where perhaps they were originally manufactured*. At last they were found ; and a few people in Europe perused them ; and as these had no inclination to doubt, they believed that a man called Julius Cæsar had lived. Now let us suppose that the preaching of Christ and his Apostles is denied.

* This is seriously maintained by Pere Harduin.

VOLTAIRE.

LET us suppose it.

AUGUSTINE.

DID you ever see a church?—Is not Europe covered with them? And is not the Turkish Empire covered with the ruins of them? Does not Christianity exist? Are there not millions of Christians scattered through the East? What is the inference?

VOLTAIRE.

THAT there was some reason for building these churches.

AUGUSTINE.

LET us trace this reason from century to century; and to do this we have the help of innumerable volumes;
the

the history and the laws of every country mark out its progress; for every age, and every nation known to that age, afford us documents, till we trace it up to the Roman Laws and the Roman history itself: From all which we will find, that these churches were built in consequence of the preaching of Christ and his Apostles. The reality of this fact being established, every thing else will follow which the Christian can desire. And to the proofs of this fact, how inferior, even nothing in comparison, is the proof that Cæsar lived!—and yet even to doubt That is a sin against common sense. I must soon leave you, Voltaire; ere I depart, tell me what advantage

vantage does your sceptical philosophy propose.

VOLTAIRE.

It gives the greatest pleasure in argument. He that argues for Religion, is like a person cooped up in a fortress which he himself did not plan, and many of whose walls are weak and ruinous; and if a breach is once made, his cause is lost. On the other hand, the sceptic is like the assailant: he chooses his ground in the open field; and though battery after battery is demolished, it is nothing to him, he can raise others elsewhere; and though again dispossessed, he is still unconquered, he can still raise more*.

* See H——'s eulogy on the Author of a treatise on the Populousness of Ancient Nations.

H

AU-

AUGUSTINE.

To carry on the allusion, let us suppose the country people around are ruined by our assailant's building so many batteries every where on their grounds.

VOLTAIRE.

In that case he is a consummate rascal.

AUGUSTINE.

AND what better is your sceptical Philosopher, who for his amusement unnerves the obligation of every virtue, laughs at piety, and confounds the difference between good and evil, between vice and virtue, and thus unhinges every bond of society? When youth is lively and warm, and the
judg-

judgment uninformed, scepticism flatters every wish of debauchery. Without being master of one syllable of the argument, how many thousands are the profelytes of Infidelity! The authority of a Voltaire, a Rousseau, or a H——, is enough for them; and thus bigotry and profligacy go hand in hand: and often, when Death approaches, the cowardice of guilt and a transition to the most abject superstition complete the detestable character. Such, Voltaire, are your disciples! May the designs of your heart, at the awful bar, be found innocent! I retire.—The shade of a celebrated modern approaches you.

[*Ex. Augustine.*

H 2

Enter

Enter STERNE *and* ROUSSEAU.

ROUSSEAU.

SINCE I retired with Porphyry and Julian, I have had a conversation with the English Rabelais, who comes with me, desirous to see Voltaire—

STERNE.

AND to congratulate him on his arrival in the region of spirits.

VOLTAIRE.

Most excellent Shandy, your presence exhilarates me!—I have just now been harrassed and teased by an old monk, who dared to call the *Esprits forts* of modern times the veriest slaves of bigotry and prejudice.

STERNE.

S T E R N E.

ROUSSEAU has informed me of your conversation with those noble *Esprits forts* of antiquity, Porphyry and Julian; but I am surprised, that in enumerating the arts and the arguments with which the moderns attack Christianity, some principal ones should have been omitted by so great a master of the subject as Voltaire.

V O L T A I R E.

THERE was a peevishness about them which distressed me. But tell me, my Fellow-Philosopher, what capital arguments have escaped me?

S T E R N E.

MANY: For example, modern * philosophy says virtue and vice are merely

* See H——'s essays passim.

artificial ; what is vice in one age and country, is virtue in another, the difference lying entirely in habit of thinking : And further, the spirit of scepticism is strengthened by philosophical proof, that there is no relation between cause and effect, that there is no such thing as body or colour * ; 'tis all an impression on the imagination ; in short, that men have no proof of their own existence.

ROUSSEAU.

By this Philosophy it is impossible for men to find a demonstrative proof of any thing ; whence then do they find a proof that there is no proof † ?

* Colour and beauty, according to strict philosophical truth, have no existence but in the mind of the percipient ; yet to us these appear to be qualities of external objects. *Lord K--s.*

† And accordingly Pyrrho and his followers have

VOLTAIRE.

My ingenious Sterne, I am not ignorant of this Philosophy; but *entre nous* I will confess to you, that I was ashamed to mention it to Porphyry and Julian. The old vulgar way of thinking, called common sense, seemed to have such possession of them, that I must have stood their laughter a long while, ere I could have brought them to admire the modern refinements on Pyrrhonism. Besides, Porphyry would have told me, that as the whole drift of this Philosophy was to prove the impossibility of proof, we need only to turn its artillery on itself, and the have syllogized to shew that demonstration is impossible. See his Life in Diog. Laert. Casaub. Edit. p. 688.

whole fabrick will fall to pieces, like a schoolboy's castle of cards *.

ROUSSEAU.

I NEVER had patience to hear these ravings of Philosophy: The old nonsense of the Sophists, that a thing, at the same time, might be both true and false, is not more ridiculous.

VOLTAIRE.

A FINE compliment truly to the present age! which so much admires this Philosophy, and the ingenuity of its great champion.

ROUSSEAU.

THAT Philosopher often talks through his sleep. Ere now his talk in

* This was confessed by the Pyrrhonists of antiquity. See the same Edit. p. 680.

his

his dreams has woefully alarmed me*.

Even asleep his voice is ominous.—

Though an unembodied spirit, I tremble for my existence; for, according to him, what perception is other than delusion? But a ray from heaven, a sentence from the son of Sirach, restores me; “What is fear but a betraying of the succours which reason offers.”

And reason clearly tells us, that the hypothesis which denies the testimony of the senses, and the difference of colours, referring all to the imagination, is the most impossible miracle. From what agency does the perception arise?

* See Rousseau's letters on his quarrel with H---e, where he seriously tells the public, how that gentleman's talking through his sleep alarmed and terrified him.

What

What gives the impressi^on? To say it is *ex nihilo*, how unworthy of Philosophy! What is easier to conceive, than that a material body gives the same impressi^on to the percipient faculty of millions? and what more absurdly inconceiveable, than that millions should have the same perception, without the existence of the object which to all their imaginations seems present! That the human eye does not perceive colours in their just analysis, may be true; yet there is a real difference between red and yellow, which causes a different perception in every beholder. The *Æneid* has charmed for eighteen hundred years: and shall so many generations of men have the same delight excited on reading the
and

poem of Virgil, and yet no power
of exciting that delight contained
in that immortal work?

VOLTAIRE.

THE delight is not the same ;—
all do not alike feel the beauties of
poetry.

ROUSSEAU.

WOULD you still be for rambling
in the endless mazes of sophistry ?
Are you only happy when you can
puzzle yourself ? All do not see alike
clearly : The impression is weaker as the
organ is weaker ; the object is uniformly
the same. Again I repeat it, how
absurdly inconceiveable is that philo-
sophy,

sophy, that delirium of scepticism, which confesses the impression, and yet denies the reality of the cause; a cause uniform in all ages, and among all the millions of mankind. And on this Philosophy must we build a structure of infidelity! Alas! what more like the foolish builder who founded his house on the sand; but the rain beat upon it, the wind blew, and it tumbled in ruins!

VOLTAIRE.

WHEN a comet appears, the natives of Malabar think that the Author of Nature has sent it on purpose to prognosticate the death of their worthless Nabob: The good people of Constantinople

tinople imagine its only errand is to announce some disaster to their city : The honest inhabitants of the Swiss Cantons fancy, it has no other business than to portend some calamity to the Burghers of Berne ; while the Chactaws of North America as wisely conclude, that it foretels the death of their Sachem, or a war with their neighbours the Catawas. Nor are the sagacious English——

STERNE.

BUT what is the inference of all this ?

VOLTAIRE.

A VERY plain one. You said I had omitted some of the arguments against Christianity ; and I have just now thought of one.

STERNE.

S T E R N E .

WELL, what is it?

V O L T A I R E .

How distant from vulgar stupidity and narrowness is the Philosopher's doctrine of Comets ! nor are the religious creeds of the vulgar and of the Philosopher less different. The herd of every country think the little circle around them, employs the great attention of Providence, and that worlds must blaze in the sky to influence their insignificant affairs : In like manner they consider the Almighty as busying himself from all eternity about their worthless souls. How different
the

the views of the Philosopher ! What an infinity of worlds in his eye be-star the boundless realms of space ; and how unworthy of Almighty Nature is that partial, trifling, care of man, which the vulgar attribute to their God !

STERNE.

I AM afraid your Philosopher does not rest here, but is apt to be too humble.

ROUSSEAU.

THERE is little danger of that ; Humility was never a virtue among Philosophers.

STERNE.

STERNE.

He is surely too humble who thinks himself unworthy of the care of Heaven.

VOLTAIRE.

MAN is not neglected by Nature. How amply has she stored the world with necessaries and luxuries! how lavish her bounty! When the gay butterfly has sipped of every flower, and has fluttered through his summer, he lays himself down in an endless winter of rest. That it should not be always youth and summer, how ungenerous the complaint!

ROUSSEAU.

I now understand you. Your Philosopher, lost in contemplation of the
amazing,

amazing, perhaps infinite, variety of the objects of Nature's care, esteems human life the all of man.

VOLTAIRE.

AND not unreasonably. The vulgar notion of heaven is extremely like the vulgar opinion of comets.

ROUSSEAU.

THE vulgar notions are, indeed, highly absurd; yet the highest idea I can form of the Deity, does not exclude his care for the race of men.

VOLTAIRE.

ENJOY your idea with all my heart :
For my part, I cannot conceive that
Almighty Nature, which has infinite
worlds to govern, is so partially fond
of the earthen animal man, as to
I raise

raise him to a being of next rank to
Divinity.

STERNE,

By the term Almighty Nature,
your Philosophers often slip into the
idea of pervading a mere plastic cause,
a Spinozan God; and bewildered in the
idea of its greatness, the mind learns
to condemn the hopes of Religion.
This confusion of their enlarged idea,
I believe, has produced many a thou-
sand *Esprits forts*.

ROUSSEAU.

ALAS, how unphilosophical! Is it
only oceans and mountains that an-
nounce the greatness of the Author
of Nature! The meanest blade that
vegetates, the smallest insect that
crawls,

crawls, in its amazing complication of fibres, bespeaks his power and grandeur. And shall such astonishing profusion of design be discovered in the formation of the most worthless animal, and shall the meanest agent of the moral world be thought unworthy of his care? A supposition how unworthy of an Intelligent Cause! In the brute creation Nature has provided an adequate supply to every want; every appetite has its object at hand; and you can name no purpose of their creation which is unanswered by the appointment of Nature. With man how different? Prone to vice, and surrounded with temptation, his life is a struggle of moral agency; and that soul which can feel that there is something base in vice, and something

noble in virtue ; that soul, amidst all its failings, discovers a tendency to moral perfection ; a tendency that can never ripen into perfection in human life. Here then is something incomplete : And so far from thinking it unworthy of the attention of the Almighty to give a completion to the tendency of the human mind, that were the blind earthworm, a moral agent, I would pronounce it worthy of Omnipotence to raise it from stage to stage to angelick perfection. Experiment has proved that every plant is contained perfect in the seed. The acorn contains the future oak in all its branching pride ; and shall Nature raise it from that diminutive state till its branches mingle with the clouds, and shall the angel in the man be esteemed

teemed unworthy of her perfecting care? Hearken to the voice of Nature; analogy, the surest interpreter of Philosophy, pronounces it impossible.

VOLTAIRE.

Now sermon is over, let me ask Sterne, what other arguments against Christianity have I omitted? Should he mention a good one, it would give me more pleasure than all that Metaphysics have to say of analogy.

STERNE.

You have omitted a very successful one. What could be more effectual than to prove that Natural Religion and Christianity are at irreconcilable variance?

ROUSSEAU.

THIS were every thing. Woolaston has asserted, and indeed it is a most certain conclusion, that no doctrine can be of divine Revelation which contradicts those clear and certain principles of Natural Religion, which the Almighty has written on the human heart.

STERNE.

NATURAL Religion consists in the belief of a God, and the soul's immortality ; without these, particularly the last, it has no existence ; for in that case honesty has no obligation but convenience ; and vice is often extremely convenient to the attainment of worldly good, while many virtues have often the
contrary

contrary effect. Now if we can prove that this pretended Revelation teaches the natural mortality of the soul, we have set it sufficiently at variance with Natural Religion. And this conclusive advantage we have already gained, and even by the assistance of some of the clergy, who very gravely call themselves *rational Christians*.

VOLTAIRE.

You agreeably surprize me.—I did not know this argument had gained much ground.

S T E R N E.

It has gained mightily. Socinus first discovered it; but in the present age, a reverend Archdeacon, a very rational Christian, tells us, that the

mortality of the soul is almost demonstrated.

VOLTAIRE.

To be the doctrine of Christianity, I suppose.

STERNE.

UNDOUBTEDLY. Had you mentioned this to Porphyry and Julian, it must have given them great pleasure, Natural Religion must now disclaim Christianity, as no daughter of hers.

VOLTAIRE.

You much mistake Porphyry and Julian ; they would have told me with indignation, that they desired to know what philosophical arguments had been discovered against Christianity ; and not what jumble of opinions had
mis-

misrepresented it. Perhaps, indeed, they might have wondered what induced the clergy to maintain a doctrine so disgraceful to their cause.

STERNE.

It is honourable to their cause, they tell us, and gives importance to the revealed doctrine of a Resurrection.

VOLTAIRE.

An honourable importance indeed ! would Porphyry reply. If the soul is extinct at Death, a Resurrection is in the strictest sense a new creation. And what detestable idea does this give of the Supreme, to create a being, and impress on his mind a delusive belief of former existence, and then punish
or

or reward him according to that impression they might have wondered

STERNE.

BUT the soul-sleeper would say, that it was no new creation ; that the soul was a quality which remained in a state of dormancy.

VOLTAIRE.

AND Porphyry would have said, this is most egregious nonsense. If the mind is only a quality resulting from organization, there can be no identity of mental being ; for the constituent parts of these organs are not two hours together identically the same ; and therefore what results from them can have no continued identity, without which
the

the doctrine of rewards and punishments is a mere burlesque on the Deity. Besides, what idea have you of the resulting quality of a dead body? To say such unimaginable quality is capable of being endowed with consciousness, is as absurd as to say there is a tune in the ashes of an organ, which is capable of being identically revived.

S T E R N E.

BUT this is appealing to Philosophy, which the soul-sleeper says, has nothing to do with a matter of Revelation. Now, could we wish for happier concessions? All the absurdities you have mentioned as consequent of the soul's mortality, only tend to disgrace that Revelation
which

which teaches it. Could we wish for more?

VOLTAIRE.

Wish for more! Porphyry would have told me with disdain that this was all impertinence; that the mortality of the soul, the happy contradiction to Natural Religion which you boast of, is no doctrine of the New Testament, which contains many express declarations, and many certain and clear inferences of the contrary; that however many profelytes these misrepresentations may bring over to the cause of infidelity, this is not defeating Christianity by proof and argument, which is the only information that could give pleasure to the anxious minds of Porphyry and Julian.

STERNE.

STERNE.

AND with that information they might have been gratified. Has not a Scottish * Philosopher proved that the free agency of the mind is all a jest, and the feeling which men mistake for it a meer delusion ; in short, that every thing, from the shaking of a child's rattle to the fall of an empire, are by such an absolute necessity as could not even admit the possibility of happening otherwise ? Happy Philosopher, who thus could trace the motives of the mind, and so accurately discover their source, how applicable is thy motto !

*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari !*

* Lord K—s.

One

One objection indeed lies against his system, that it makes God the author of sin; but the rapture that inspired him on the review of his glorious labours, now also kindles my bosom, and puts his words in my mouth: "What mortals term sin, God pronounces to be only error; for moral evil vanishes, in some measure, from before his more perfect sight; and as at the beginning of days he saw, so now he sees and pronounces still that every thing is good."

V O L T A I R E.

GLORIOUS indeed! A deep insight into human motive will prove an absolute necessity, and therefore what men call sin; God accounts only error; all is good, and Christianity, as useless, is at last

last philosophically defeated. My ingenious Tristram, let us congratulate one another.

STERNE.

Not quite so fast, Voltaire. I have mentioned three methods of attacking Christianity. Two of them appeared despicable even to yourself; it now remains for me to expose the futility of the third. The Scotchman has indeed new trimmed the old system of Democritus and Anthony Collins, and has talked about the investigation of motives; but he has confounded physical and moral necessity; and from the want of such a liberty as even the Almighty himself cannot enjoy, the liberty of doing a thing, and yet not doing it at the same instant, has wisely con-

concluded there is no such thing as liberty of volition at all.

VOLTAIRE.

ARE you doing his argument justice?

S T E R N E.

YES, strictly. Does not he himself state the case of chusing between two objects where the necessity evidently rests on this point, that of two objects one cannot chuse both, and yet refuse one? I have just now thought of an excellent argument to prove that a horse cannot walk.

VOLTAIRE.

HA—What is it?

S T E R N E.

WHY, because a horse cannot fly. My proof is exactly of a kind with our
phi-

Philosopher's one against the liberty of volition ; an argument which makes even God himself a surd Being, and strips him of his primary agency, by making him subject to a superior cause.

ROUSSEAU.

BUT our author professes to look up to God with reverence and awe, as the fountain from which the whole system of necessity flows.

STERNE.

HE may profess what he will : But either God enjoys perfect liberty, or he does not. If he enjoys perfect liberty, the impossibility of doing and yet not doing a thing, is no proof against the reality of liberty. But if God the first cause does not enjoy liberty,

berty, there is a cause prior and superior to the first Cause.

The human heart, though in the midst of the deepest misery, still constitutionally pants after happiness; which is a strong philosophical presumption that the Author of Nature has also appointed some attainable relief, adequate to this natural impulse: But this relief can never arise from the system of necessity. Tell a wretch in the extremes of pain, that his torment is necessary, his mind will immediately enquire, Why? And if you can give no better reason than that it was absolutely, fatally, or, what is the same, unconditionally predestinated, what horror, despair, and detestation, must overwhelm him, when he turns his eyes on his God. Frenzy and blasphemy
in

in his case, were magnanimity and honest indignation ; and self-murder his best, his only refuge. Again must I admire the propriety of our Philosopher's motto, and how applicable to his system may it be thus paraphrased :

“ HAPPY is he who can trace the
“ causes of things up to a fatal and ab-
“ solute necessity. He tramples under
“ his feet every terror, and the fear of
“ death, and is a match for inexor-
“ able fate ; for when things are at the
“ worst,—he can hang himself.”

VOLTAIRE.

BUT why should Philosophers be so earnest to account for the origin of evil, when it scarcely may be said to exist. Moral evil, says our Philosopher, vanishes from the more perfect sight of God, who, as at the begin-

ning of days he saw, so now he sees,
and pronounces still, "that every
"thing is good."

R O U S S E A U.

Yes, and he says too—"As spots
"in the sun's bright orb, so, in the
"universal plan, scattered evils are
"lost in the blaze of superabundant
"goodness."

S T E R N E.

So, to carry on the allusion, there
are no evils to be seen by the naked
eye; we must have a telescope to
view them.—Hem!—this will never
do.—I'll tell you an anecdote. Our
poet Cowley valued himself not a
little on the virtue of contentment,
and wondered how people could be
otherwise; but he forgot that every
body

body had not five hundred a year with himself. So some of our Philosophers from their elbow-chairs, amidst all the elegancies of life, very gravely pronounce the earth to be a mighty agreeable sort of a place, and for their heart and blood cannot find out the evil which some folks talk so much about.

ROUSSEAU.

A poor compliment to the goodness of their hearts, which seem so little affected by the groans of misery, which are every where on earth to be heard.

STERNE.

To be serious.—There is one evil, which, were there no other, would

render the present system of humanity most imperfect and most unhappy ; an evil the most deeply felt by the most amiable minds—I mean, Death.

VOLTAIRE.

WHAT, are the most amiable minds the most selfish and cowardly ?

STERNE

EVERY thing different. He who never can think of his own death without a secret joy, will the most bitterly feel, when the dear companion of his life, the friend of his bosom, drops into the grave. How dreadful to friendship are the devastations of Death ! How imperfect must

must it feel that system, which is liable to so terrible an evil!

VOLTAIRE.

BUT a reason may be given for the admission of death without impeaching the goodness of God. A reverend Archbishop * has done this. The happiness of his creatures, says he, was God's motive in creation. Now young people have much more happiness in life than the old; therefore for the increase of happiness it is very proper that the old should die, and make room for the young; and therefore Death is not a natural evil.

STERNE.

A SNEER at a Parson still pleases you.

* King, Archbishop of Dublin.

VOLTAIRE.

'Tis true, a foolish argument only betrays a cause. I just mentioned the Archbishop's for want of a better.

ROUSSEAU.

AN English Philosopher has perhaps afforded a better one. Those evils which men are liable to, may conduce to the happiness of other Beings, invisible and superior to them.

STERNE.

O PHILOSOPHY, how often hast thou been dressed out in the fool's coat. Come, lay hold on thy rattle and bells, while I present you a scene of human misery.

VOL-

VOLT AIRE.

WHY, Sterne, will you be stage, scene, and actors, all in one?

S T E R N E.

YES, for a little while. Suppose now here stands Philosophy with a fool's cap, rattle, and bells; and here comes a poor man carried on a litter. By a fall from a house-top, where by hard labour he was earning his family's sustenance, both his thighs are broken, and his back disjointed. See, his wife and six or seven children, who depended for daily bread on his daily labour, see them shrieking and fainting around him; while he is awaken'd from a swoon by the additional agony of the prospect of wanting food, and
already

already he thinks he hears his children
 crying for bread. Philosophy now steps
 forth, and shaking her rattle, "Halloo
 " you, says she, be content, I tell you ;
 "'tis for the good of the whole that
 " your bones should be thus pounded
 " and smashed." The poor man is too
 much absorbed in misery to regard her;
 but one of the spectators steps forward,
 and with an arch look, "For the good
 " of the whole ! says he : Why the
 " Doctor will never get a farthing from
 " this poor man ; and what good, I
 " wonder, will the torture of his broken
 " limbs do to the whole ?" "There's
 " your ignorance," replies Philosophy
 (observe how like an owl she looks,)
 "there are other beings superior to
 " men, and his torment may conduce
 " to their happiness." "So one of these
 beings,

" beings, says the other, pushed this
 " poor fellow from the house-top to
 " see what wry faces he would make
 " for the good of the whole! I wish
 " such a Whole as this were at the De-
 " vil: Such a blessed Company would
 " reap great good in the bottomless pit.
 " But hark ye, Mrs. Wisdom, don't nod
 " your fool's cap at me, but tell me
 " how you prove all this, and how
 " can the good of your Whole arise
 " from an innocent man's torment?"
 " O Sir, replies Philosophy, I confess
 " this is entirely inconceivable*." Ha,
 " indeed! says the other, then do you
 " please to walk off with your rattle
 " and bells, and give place to this wor-

* See the Origin of evil by S--- J--- Esq.
 where this system, and this confession are both
 to be found.

" thy

“ thy man, who is approaching to in-
“ struct the unhappy sufferer in the
“ filial submission and filial hope in-
“ spired by Religion.

VOLTAIRE.

PHILOSOPHY in a fool's garb ! You
amaze me.

STERNE.

WHEN your Geniusses put such
egregious nonsense into the mouth
of Philosophy, the eye of just ima-
gination can behold her in no other
habit.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT you have not refuted the
Scottish Philosopher's doctrine of a
fatal necessity.

STERNE.

S T E R N E.

I HAVE already refuted it by the most certain inference. Leaving all the labyrinths of physical and moral necessity, subjects with which men are not perfectly acquainted, let us come to the certain result of the whole, to this short alternative, Is the Almighty Eternal * a good or an evil Being? Is he perfect or imperfect?

* Lord K——s's solution of how God is and is not the author of sin, is truly remarkable. The intention of God and the sinner, are different, says he; what God decrees "is to carry
 " on the great and good designs of Providence;
 " but they (*the Sinners*) have no such purpose
 " in view, nor any other aim but to gratify
 " their own lusts and passions." And yet, according to our author's system, the sinner can have no intention

VOLTAIRE.

AN English Philosopher, my Lord Bolingbroke, confesses that the creation demonstrates his omnipotence; but he affirms likewise, that men can bring no philosophical proof of his goodness.

STERNE.

YES, Bolingbroke says so, and what then? The perfect goodness of the Almighty Being is capable of as strict demonstration as that two and two are equal to four. Come, my Philosopher, define me what constitutes an evil being?

intention but what God absolutely decrees him to have, "admitting," to use his own words, "the possibility of none other."

ROUS-

ROUSSEAU.

It is a depravity, or weakness.

STERNE.

AND its action is two-fold: Either it pursues some apparent happiness which in reality is not such; or it pursues an ungenerous happiness by unjust means, by means that tend to the hurt of others. The first instance, the pursuit of false happiness, which is implied in the definition of vice, is utterly irreconcilable with Omniscience; and it is impossible, a contradiction in terms, that Omnipotence can have a motive for the second. To suppose Omnipotence could be unjust, says Montesquieu *, is to suppose the Almighty the most detestable Being, a

* In his Lettres Persanes.

Being

Being wicked without the possibility
of motive.

VOLTAIRE:

BUT evil does exist ; therefore the
permission of it is an impeachment of
the Almighty's goodness.

ROUSSEAU.

PHILOSOPHY should be loth to say
so. She will tell you that

Partial ill is universal good ;
and that it is necessary there should be
such a link as man in the chain of be-
ing, a link between the Brutes and
Angels ; and therefore man is just as
perfect and happy as he ought to be. If
this link were taken away, the stupen-
dous whole must be destroyed ; on

view

view of which, kindled into a noble
enthusiasm, Philosophy exclaims,

All this dread order break! for whom,
for thee,

Vile worm! Oh madness, pride, impiety!

S T E R N E.

THESE are high-sounding words;
but after all, this Arabian tale is only
vox et preterea nihil. It may be de-
monstrated, that many links of the
brutal creation may be wanted, and
are wanted in many countries, with-
out all this dread order being broken.
We can very easily conceive that thou-
sands of degrees of angels might exist
without man. You cannot prove,
nor even conceive a necessity why an-
gels should be linked to the brutes. You
produce the allusion of a chain; but

L

allu-

sions prove nothing: And how, in the name of wonder, is a thing of continued parts applicable to beings of individual existence? Again: If such a link as man is necessary, his misery and guilt make him a strange absurd connective between brutal tranquility and angelical innocence and bliss. Imperfect happiness might become such a link, but guilt could have no necessary part in it. Again: If for the support of the whole such a link is necessary for one hour, it must be necessary for ever. But let the Spirit of a poor African utter his feelings. He has heard our discourse, and is burning with indignation at your Philosophy.

Enter

Enter SPIRIT.

SPIRIT.

Is such misery as I have suffered
necessary to the existence and bliss of
angels!

All this dread order break, vile worm, for
thee!

Yes for me: Yes, Eternal Justice will
break it for me, who died the lowest
of mankind, and in the deepest miseries
of slavery! Oh, how shocking that
plan of Providence which requires such
victims of misery! But I leave you to
your impiety, and retire to yonder ar-
gent fields, where with my ancestors
I shall remain in rest, till the God of
our country destroy evil and restore all
Nature.

STERNE.

LET that poor African teach you how absurd is that system, which supposes that the ultimate perfection intended by God depends on the imperfection of the smallest part.

ROUSSEAU.

But Imperfection exists in man; and your argument, which confutes the Philosophy of links, unavoidably leads back to the system of absolute necessity.

STERNE.

By no means. How does it invalidate that clearest of all arguments which demonstrates the goodness of the Almighty? If on the one hand there

there is some darkness, on the other there is the clearest light. If we cannot perfectly trace from whence evil came, we can nevertheless demonstrate that it did not come from the almighty, all-perfect Being.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT his permission is the same thing,

STERNE.

A ROUND assertion is of excellent use in modern Philosophy; but you are not aware what you must prove before this assertion is good for any thing.

VOLTAIRE.

PROVE! why it is a self-evident truth.

L 3

STERNE.

S T E R N E.

SOFTLY, my Philosopher. You must prove, that you are exactly acquainted with the government of the Supreme, before you set limits to it, and say that permission is the same as his absolute act. But the human understanding can form no adequate idea of the mode of his government ; the best which men can say is, that it cannot be involved in contradiction or absurdity. You must also prove in support of your assertion, that the Almighty treats his rational creatures as mere machines or irrationals ; yet this is an absurdity which the human understanding can clearly perceive ; and therefore sound reason will never ascribe it to the government of the omniscient

niscient Almighty. Hence arises the utmost probability that evil owes its origin to the abuse of free agency, and that it will have an end. But yonder Spirits who have been hearing our discourse seem anxious to give their opinions. This, Rousseau, was an Egyptian Priest before the days of Moses.

ROUSSEAU.

I LONG to hear him.

First SPIRIT.

ALAS! has wisdom died with the ancients! Typhon by his daring revolt gave birth to evil: The God Orus has already bound him in chains, and will in the end finally subdue him and restore all things.

S T E R N E.

AND this is one of the oldest of the Persian Magi.

Second S P I R I T.

DREADFUL to the creation was the revolt of Arimanius; but the God Mythras has overcome him, and will at the end of the great year restore the perfection of both intellectual and material nature.

S T E R N E.

ALL antiquity talks loudly of a golden age, and that the present is not the original state of Nature. Philosophy may ramble through the limbo of Theory, and talk of her links and the good of the whole; but Reason ever was, and ever will be shocked

shocked at the supposition, that man, who is born to misery as the sparks fly upward, came in that imperfect state from the hands of his Omnipotent Maker. Observe, yonder old British Druid, pointing to his mistletoe bough, assents to the belief of the restoration of Nature. This belief, Voltaire, has taken deep and universal root in the most ancient and distant nations, and is evidently to be traced in the grosser fables of Greece and Rome, in the labours of an Hercules, and in the deliverance of an Andromeda. Here is a striking proof of an Old Tradition that can only be ascribed to Revelation. How unworthy of the Deity is the modern philosophy of the origin of evil, which says, that it must for ever exist; and how despicable when compared with old
Tra-

Tradition! Yet how glorious above that, and explanatory of it, is Christianity, the sum of which is a promise of the final abolition of that imperfect system, during which the whole creation groans under the ravages of Misery and Evil, the cruel daughters of Guilt! Christianity, that calls forth the noblest desires and virtues of humanity, and assures them of increasing vigour in immortal existence!

ROUSSEAU.

WHILE infidel Philosophy depresses, and represents them as vain meteors, glimmering for a while, and shortly to drop into nothing—I recollect with pleasure how much I despised modern Philosophy.

STERNE.

S T E R N E.

AND yet you went into enough of her fooleries. You only loved them when they were of your own begetting. You seem low-spirited, Voltaire: I will endeavour to enliven you, and irritate your vein for ridicule by presenting you an object highly worthy of it. I will conjure up a Genius that will prove any thing whatever.

V O L T A I R E.

WHAT, will he prove that the most improbable is nevertheless more than probable?

S T E R N E.

THAT is an easy matter with him. Genius of Sceptical Philosophy, arise.

V O L.

VOLTAIRE.

HEAVENS, how he resembles one
of my friends!

STERNE.

Yes, he has a good honest counte-
nance, and does not want for learning,
which he makes a dexterous use of, to
prove or disprove as he pleases. You
know the monstrous absurdities of the
Egyptian idolatry :

Quis nescit—qualia demens

Egyptus portenta colat? Crocodilon adorat

Pars hæc : illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibim,

Illic cæruleos, hic piscem fluminis, illic

Oppida tota canem venerantur—

Perrum et cepe nefas violare, ac frangere morfu.

O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis

Numina—

Birds, beasts, and fishes, leeks and oni-
ons were all adored by besotted Egypt.

Now

Now would you think that this motley idolatry was the same as the Christian Religion, their difference being too frivolous to deserve attention?

VOLTAIRE.

BE sure I could not.

STERNE.

BUT our Genius will prove it.
Come, open, Mr. Sceptic.

SCEPTIC.

* "It is strange that the Egyptian
"Religion, though so absurd, should
"yet have borne so great a resemblance
"to the Jewish, that antient writers
"even of the greatest genius *were not*
"*able to observe any difference betwixt*

* H — 's Natural History of Religion.

" *them.*

“ *them*. For it is very remarkable, that
 “ both Tacitus and Suetonius, when
 “ they mention that decree of the Se-
 “ nate under Tiberius, by which
 “ the Egyptian and Jewish Profelytes
 “ were banished from Rome, expressly
 “ treat these Religions as the same;
 “ and it appears, that even the decree
 “ itself was founded on that supposi-
 “ tion. These wise heathens observing
 “ something in the general air, and ge-
 “ nius, and spirit of the two Religions
 “ to be the same, esteemed the dif-
 “ ferences of their dogmas too frivo-
 “ lous to deserve any attention.”

VOLTAIRE.

He does not mention the Christian
 Religion.

STERNE.

S T E R N E.

BUT his argument proves, that it is the same as the Egyptian ; for the wise heathens, to whose judgment he appeals, have represented the Christian Religion as the same with the Jewish *. And can you conceive a grosser improbability than that all the banditti of Pagan Gods, with all their caprices, lusts, and villanies, did, and do actually somewhere exist?

V O L T A I R E.

I CANNOT conceive a grosser.

S T E R N E.

LET us hear what Mr. Sceptic says.

* And have confounded them together even in a decree of the learned Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Vide Selden.

S C E P T.

S C E P T I C.

* “ IF we examine without pre-
 “ dice the antient heathen mythology,
 “ as contained in the poets, we shall
 “ not discover in it any such mon-
 “ strous absurdity as we may be apt
 “ at first to apprehend. Where is
 “ the difficulty of conceiving, that
 “ the same powers or principles,
 “ whatever they were, which formed
 “ this visible world, men and animals,
 “ produced also a species of intelligent
 “ creatures of more refined substance
 “ and greater authority than the rest?
 “ That these creatures may be capri-
 “ cious, revengeful, passionate, vo-
 “ luptuous, is easily conceived; nor is
 “ any circumstance more apt amongst

* H—c.

“ ourselves

" ourselves to engender such vices
 " than the license of absolute authority.
 " And, in short, the whole mytholo-
 " gical system is so natural, that in
 " the vast variety of planets and
 " worlds, contained in this universe,
 " it seems MORE THAN PROBABLE,
 " that somewhere or other it is really
 " carried into execution."

S T E R N E.

THIS is a large portion of faith, in-
 deed; and yet this gentleman was so
 delicate in his creed, that he could not
 bring himself to believe one word of
 divine Revelation. But come, Mr.
 Genius, what is the best Philoso-
 phy?

M

S C E P.

SCEPTIC.

Most undoubtedly the sceptical *. It is the surest † guide to truth, and it is all a ‡ heap of confusion.

* Yet history demonstrates the contrary. The following observations will stand the severest test. "No nation can prosper without piety; for where that fails, public spirit and every noble sentiment will decay. The doctrine of looking up to an all-ruling Providence, and that of a future state of rewards and punishments, rendered the Roman people virtuous and great. In proportion as these doctrines were weakened by the false philosophy of Epicurus, the minds of the Romans were impoverished, and their manly patriotism was succeeded by effeminate selfishness, which quickly brought them to contempt and ruin." *Boswell's Account of Corsica.*

† See H——e's *Essays* passim.

‡ See his character of Bishop Berkley's works.

S T E R N E.

STERNE.

VERY well : And can men bring any proof that the creation was the work of a Creator ?

SCEPTIC.

NONE at all. There is no connection between cause and effect : And besides, men can only argue from experience ; now the universe is a *singular effect* * ; and therefore men can have no experience how it was made.

ROUSSEAU.

THIS is sceptical confusion, indeed ! But let me ask him, Have men any experience that a work can be without an author ?

STERNE.

HE will not answer your questions, Sir. Tell me, from whence, Mr.

* H—c.

M 2

Scep-

Sceptic, do you derive those noble qualities, “activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues that aggrandize a people?”

SCEPTIC.

FROM a firm belief in the Pagan Gods; for we are quite “at our ease in our addresses to such gods, and may without profaneness aspire to a rivalship and emulation of them. One great incitement to the pious Alexander in his warlike expeditions was his rivalship of Hercules and Bacchus, whom he justly pretended to have excelled.”

STERNE.

AND from whence do you derive cowardice, abject submission, and the other weaknesses of the human mind?

SCEPTIC.

SCEPTIC.

* " FROM the representation of the
 " Deity as infinitely superior to man-
 " kind ; for this belief, though alto-
 " gether just, is apt, when joined
 " with superstitious terrors, to sink
 " the human mind into the lowest
 " submission and abasement."

STERNE.

Do you mean to insinuate that su-
 perstitious terrors are attendants on
 the belief of the infinite superiority of
 the Deity?

SCEPTIC.

IF you had read the volumes I have
 written, you could not doubt that I

* H.—e.

M 3

mean

mean so. Besides, my present argument expressly demands it; for, observe that the glorious virtues which I have derived from the Pagan creed, arise from this; the easy familiarity with which one views these gods, and which made not only the Stoic Seneca, but even the mad Alexander esteem himself as a better fellow than the best of them.

ROUSSEAU.

O STERNE, I am sick of this Genius. Have I no better joys in the world of spirits than to hear the ravings of Philosophy?

STERNE.

See, I have dismissed him. I myself must now retire; but Swift is at hand,

Exit Sterne.

Enter

Enter S W I F T.

V O L T A I R E.

OH my friend, your presence has relieved me from some painful qualms! You and I both wrote against Christianity, and I see you are not damned: it is heaven to see you.

S W I F T.

INDEED, Voltaire, I am not. But what Demon possessed you to imagine I ever wrote against Christianity? My heart burnt with indignation against the madness of Fanaticism and the shameless corruptions of the Church of Rome. In my *Tale of a Tub* I employed all the artillery of my wit

M 4

against

against these. But is that writing against the Christianity of the New Testament? No; it is defending it, by exposing the nonsense and trumpery that audaciously assumes that sacred name. Never in my most unguarded mirth, when I laughed at superstition or fanaticism, never did I blend them with the idea of manly Religion or true Piety. There is this characteristical difference between your writings and mine; I carefully distinguish, and only laugh at bigotry and folly. But if you mention an absurdity of a Professor of Religion, Religion itself is represented as the cause. If you mention the ridiculous pretence of a crack-brained Bramin to Revelation, Revelation in every idea of it is treated with a fly but obvious contempt. This is the

the spirit that breathes through all your works. In mine, in innumerable places I have earnestly argued for, and witnessed the deepest regard for Christianity—my heart ever despised an Infidel!

VOLTAIRE.

BUT I died a Christian,

S W I F T.

DIED, alas! flying for refuge to that idle Popish trumpery which my writings have so justly ridiculed,

But tell me, Voltaire, what was your chief motive for infidelity?

VOLTAIRE.

THE love of Truth and of Virtue.

S W I F T.

S W I F T.

AND from reading his works, Rousseau, what would one think was his method of searching for these goddesses?

R O U S S E A U.

By the mass, a very odd one; 'twas like searching for sun-shine in the farthest corner of a coal-pit.

V O L T A I R E.

You would have been more severe, had you said, 'twas like searching for sound reason in the works of Rousseau.

R O U S S E A U.

To be sure, burlesque and misrepresentation. are excellent guides to truth.

V O L.

VOLTAIRE.

AND the vagaries of theory never
lose sight of reason ; witness when you
sent your pupils to the beastly Hot-
tentots for education and morals.

SWIFT.

AND did these motives you pretend
to, Voltaire, did these dictate your ac-
count of *L'amour Socratique* ?

ROUSSEAU.

A most detestable depravity then
possessed him, to give it the gentlest
name.

VOLTAIRE.

AND what detestable depravity pos-
sessed Rousseau, when his heart swelled
with

with rancour against his well intentioned benefactor Mr. OH—e? You look angry, my Philosopher of the Mountains; but pray talk of any thing you please except persecution.

ROUSSEAU.

Good heaven! does the Author of *Candide* dare to pretend to the love of virtue? Was there ever so daring a burlesque of the justice of Providence!

VOLTAIRE.

WHAT nobler part than to ridicule superstition?

ROUSSEAU.

To burlesque the principles of the purest Theism, the belief in God's moral government, is undoubtedly an excellent cure for superstition.

VOL-

VOLTAIRE.

AND can you believe I was serious
when I wrote *Candide* ?

ROUSSEAU.

WHAT a pity is it then, that you
had not chosen a motto from Solomon's
proverbs ! The fool who throws fire-
brands, you know, pretends it was
only in sport ; but others are seriously
hurt by his amusement.

VOLTAIRE.

AND no doubt your praise of self-
murder is well calculated to promote
the good of human society ?

ROUSSEAU.

SELF-MURDER is in some cases the
dictate of the noblest feelings : It is
often

often the dernier resort of the greatest minds; and it adds a finishing lustre to the first of the Roman names.

SWIFT.

EVERY circumstance I deny.—But before we came to moral argumentation, let us view what sort of lustre Self-murder has cast on the first of the Roman names; alas, when the facts pass in review before us, we shall seriously wonder what has bewitched the world in admiration. Let us behold the children and friends of Cato, apprehensive of his purpose, with the tenderest affection entreating him to continue among them as their guardian genius: Unmoved with their tears, he answers them with reproach and rage, and by force drives them from his presence.

In

In the scuffle an affectionate slave presumes to give his assistance, but has his teeth knocked down his throat by the enraged Cato, who soon after became his own executioner ; and still cruelly deaf to the entreaties of his friends, who would have dressed his wound, tearing up his bowels with his hands, unworthy of Philosophy, he expired with all the fury of a wild beast dying under the spear of the hunter.

VOLTAIRE.

BUT if there is something detestable in the rage of Cato, there is something truly ludicrous in the deliberate affair of Seneca's prompting his wife to the virtue of Suicide. Our Stoic was above seventy when Nero ordered him to be
bled

bled to death; his wife was about twenty-seven; yet she must voluntarily die along with her old husband; and for what reason do you think? Nay, I could defy the Cumean Sybil or the witch of Endor to discover any other than that it was *mighty fine* to do so. Awful as the scene of death is, I cannot help smiling at the thought of the old pedant repeating his moral sentences, while his young wife, pale and gasping, was putting them in practice by bleeding to death.

SWIFT.

THE merit of an action is only to be estimated by the sentiment which gave birth to it. Marcus Brutus is one of the admired Romans who died by self-murder. Let us hear what he

says

says * was his motive : “ I was engaged
 “ I know not how, says he, into an
 “ opinion which made me accuse Cato
 “ for killing himself, as thinking it an
 “ irreligious act against the Gods, nor
 “ any way valiant among men not to
 “ submit to Divine Providence, nor be
 “ able fearlessly to undergo whatever
 “ may happen. But now in the midst of
 “ dangers, I am quite of a different
 “ mind ; for, if Providence shall not
 “ dispose of what I now undertake ac-
 “ cording to our wishes, I resolve to try
 “ no further hopes, but will die. †.”

He knew not how he came to ima-
 gine it was irreligious not to submit to
 Divine Providence ; and if Providence

* In a conversation with Cassius the evening
 before the battle of Philippi.

† Life of M. Brutus.

N

would

would not immediately give him success, he would stab himself. And is this, John-James, is this the language of a great mind?

ROUSSEAU.

I do not argue for Brutus. I only assert the possibility of circumstances in which Self-murder were virtuous. *

SWIFT.

IN every instance it is cowardly; for he who does it, does it to avoid something which appears to him more terrible than death; something which he dares not face. Neither is it the dictate of noble feelings. What can be more base and ungenerous than Cato's fortifying himself against the

* Rousseau in his *Elisa* vindicates self-murder, his part in the following colloquy is therefore in character.

affection

Rousseau writes the language of a hot, impatient, tho' amiable youth, in doing violence, yet desirous of the means of enjoying it, in the fashion of Matrimonial Brutus, with a covering and put to his happiness he argues for suicide with craftiness and subtlety, but uncollected, with what a masculine energy of expression does Rousseau afterwards (in the character of Lord B——) afterwards controvert the arguments of reason, mislead by the dictates of Conscience —

*Letter 114. V. 115.
Of his Eliza*

affection of his children and friends?
If you have one friend that loves you,
what but the utmost baseness could
bear the thought of his weeping over
your self-murdered corpse?

ROUSSEAU.

BUT the case may happen where
one has no friend.

SWIFT.

WELL; I will take you upon
your surest ground, upon which even
Plato would scarcely have attacked
you. I hold self-murder utterly un-
lawful in whatever condition we may
find ourselves, though not a tear will
fall for us, though every hour comes
loaded with anguish, and though hope
may seem shut out at every avenue.

ROUSSEAU.

GRACIOUS heavens ! did the God of mercy intend any of his creatures to be unhappy ? No ; let us think more religiously of his dispensations. In the constitution of humanity, it is impossible but that evil must be. Against this evil, when become too pressing, God has afforded a remedy : He has given us the means of retiring from under its pressure ; and surely in giving us the means, he could not purpose to withhold the power.

SWIFT.

It is thus, John-James, you deceive yourself and others. You tell me that because God has given you a forefinger, therefore you are allowed to employ

employ it in pulling the trigger of a pistol applied to your own head.

ROUSSEAU.

ONCE more, I say, that Infinite Mercy cannot insist upon my unhappiness, cannot disapprove of my endeavours to deliver myself from it.

SWIFT.

Of lawful endeavours, John-James. But here lies the argument; and by attending to this, we shall approach nigher to some conclusion. You imagine the lawfulness of the action sufficiently implied by your proposition, that God cannot intend the unhappiness of his creatures. The proposition we allow; but if God does not intend their unhappiness, and if

misery is inflicted by his hand, how do you prove the lawfulness of withdrawing from under his correction? God inflicts misery either from motives benevolent or malignant; not from malignant surely, for that, to use no other, contradicts your own argument of his infinite goodness. If then he inflicts from benevolent, your crime of self-murder is aggravated by folly and ingratitude. This is no uncommon argument, John-James; but for that reason perhaps you have despised or overlooked it.

ROUSSEAU.

PERMIT me to suppose a case.

SWIFT.

SUPPOSE any case, the argument will return; and it is particularly perverse
in

in you to hold out against an argument which proceeds upon your own proposition ; for if God cannot inflict but upon benevolent motives, our happiness and not our misery must be ultimately intended. But put the case ?

ROUSSEAU.

SUPPOSE a man fallen into irremediable calamity.

SWIFT.

I UNDERSTAND you ; but your supposition cannot be allowed ; for how can any man know that his misery is irremediable ? Every day is witness to the most unexpected turns in human affairs. Had I conversed with you on earth, I would to have urged an argument which must have touched you as a

man of humanity: How should any man know, but that in cutting himself off from Society, he has deprived numbers of happiness, in the effecting of which, he might have been one day employed as the instrument?

ROUSSEAU.

BUT when all the marks of God's wrath and displeasure are upon me, how do I know but that God may intend to make myself the instrument of his punishment, and that in withdrawing from Life I only execute his will?

SWIFT.

You ask, How do you know but that God wills to make you the instrument

ment of your punishment? But with me, John-James, the very doubt would be an argument against the commission of the action; for if it may be wrong, it is surely the part of a wise and good man to avoid the perpetration of it. Besides, if you are convinced that the hand of divine punishment is pouring out the vials of its wrath upon you, it is enough; be assured the Almighty knows the exact measure; nor by any suggestions of your own, suggestions prompted by a most criminal impatience, think you can assist him in the execution of his will. Again, suffer me to your question to oppose another: How are you certain that it was not his will to make the prolongation of your life your punishment, and that by rushing out of it, you

you counteract, as far as you can,
his adorable intentions ?

ROUSSEAU.

STILL however a man may consider himself as an outcast, as one who has ceased to deserve God's regard, and should therefore cease to be. The surgeon makes no scruple to amputate the rotten limb, and why should I doubt to cut myself off from society, of which I can no longer be a serviceable member, a member perhaps likely to spread corruption among the sounder parts.

SWIFT.

To be even with you for your metaphors and allusions, John-James, let us see if all these flowers will produce

duce any fruit. A man, you say, may consider himself as one who has ceased to deserve God's regard. A man may consider himself as given over to the Devil: But do you mean that he may justly consider himself in that light, and act on such principle? You talk of the goodness of God, and acknowledge his providence, that he will reward the virtuous and punish unrepenting guilt. From these principles of Theism, it follows, that the life of man is a state of probation; and therefore to shorten the term of one's probationary trial in the lists of virtue must in every imaginable case imply guilt; nor while one probationary hour remains can we reasonably conclude that we are marked out for the children of Reprobation. If ever
man

man could decide upon his own damnation, it was the traitor Judas; yet if we consider him as putting a period to his term of probation, we can have little doubt but that his other crimes were aggravated by his final act of self-destruction. Were you a Christian, I should tell you, that your best arguments were no other than the suggestions of the Arch Deceiver, to shut the gates of hope against the wretched sinner, and to turn him from repentance. As to your rhetorical flourish of the surgeon and rotten limb, though a mighty favourite with the gentry of your opinion, it may serve for an allusion, but no further. The surgeon knows upon certainty and principle, that the limb must be amputated; but what is your evidence

for

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for thinking that you are never more to be an useful member of society, because at present you are not such? But suppose, what indeed I have already denied and disproved, that a man could be absolutely certain that his calamities were only to terminate in the grave; what then? is he therefore to blow his brains out? is there no heroism in patience? or is a filial acquiescence to the Divine Will an unreasonable duty, which may without guilt be refused? Leave it to the Atheist to assert these; but let us on the principles of Theism conclude, that "Suicide in any circumstance is a rebellion against God."

R. O. U. S.

ROUSSEAU.

By your conclusion, I observe, you only pretend to argue upon my principles; but how would you disprove the lawfulness of self-inflicted death to one who denies them?

SWIFT.

Why truly I should not attempt it. To tell a fellow who acknowledges no God to superintend on earth, or to reward or punish beyond the grave, that the disposal of his life is not in his own hands, would be a hopeful piece of business indeed. For how could I think of evincing the illegality of an action, when the ground upon which the proof must be built is taken away? One might tell an Atheist, that
by

by the prolongation of life he *might* possibly reserve himself for better circumstances, and that by shortening it he *might* deprive his dearest friends of some happiness which it *might* have been his fate to promote. But alas, these arguments, which applied to the Christian, who has many more powerful motives to persevere in nobly bearing his sufferings, must have their due effect, to the Atheist will be mere mockery. For upon what reasoning on his principles could you shew that a month's present and certain misery is to be undergone for a twelvemonth's future and uncertain pleasure? Or how would you evince that the happiness of the Son is well purchased by the misery of the Father? The Irishman's blunder would in his case be

strict

strict reasoning ; “ What has Posterity
 “ done for him that he should do so
 “ much for Posterity ? ” To feel
 his present misery, he has only to
 cast his eye around him ; all is dark,
 comfortless, and heart-depressing ;
 while to encourage him in perse-
 verance he is to look into the re-
 mote regions of possibility, and spy
 out some uncertain light glimmering
 upon the utmost verge of it. If he is
 willing to forego his chance of happi-
 ness, what should hinder him ? You
 might here flourish I know, *à votre*
façon, upon the godlike generosity
 of that Hero who braves certain ad-
 versity upon the disinterested and glo-
 rious views of being one day instru-
 mental in the happiness of his friends
 and country. But alas, my friend
 of

of human Nature, where is this generous Atheist to be found? Must we look for such heroic generosity among men whose principles tend immediately to extinguish every generous purpose of the breast?

ROUSSEAU.

You would leave then a gloomy countryman of your own to put in practice his principles, and blow his brains out upon the first unlucky bet or rainy day?

SWIFT.

CERTAINLY, if I could not persuade him of the fallacy of his principles, If a man will drink of a poisoned bowl, what help for the consequences of the infection?

O

ROUS.

ROUSSEAU.

So you would coolly recommend self-murder to an Atheist?

SWIFT.

ON certain simple conditions I would.—I would only require him to produce demonstration that there is neither a God nor an hereafter.

VOLTAIRE.

YET, as I said at first, self-murder even in an Atheist is a crime against society.

SWIFT.

OF prejudice to society, you should say. What is society to an Atheist when his connection with it is at an end? An Atheist by his principles is bound
to

to no duty but self-interest, and if he neglects that is accountable to none; and therefore, an Atheist by his own principles can be guilty of no crime. And here, my Philosophers, let us remark the wisdom of Shaftesbury and Montesquieu, who to promote the cause of virtue would destroy its connection with, or dependence on, the belief of a Deity; nor let us forget the justice of your friend Bayle's assertion, that a community of Atheists would make excellent members of society, much better ones than those who have some mistakes in Religion, and therefore are apt to quarrel about it.

VOLTAIRE.

BAYLE was a glorious luminary; he spent his life in the search of truth,

though unhappily, by his own confession, he always found error*.

SWIFT.

AND now, John-James, though to be inconsistent you know *c'est d'être Philosophe*, though absurd ingenuity is admired on earth; yet in these regions it meets the contempt it deserves, and is here

Destinat in piscem mulier formosa superne:

Either therefore cease to acknowledge the providence and goodness of God, or cease to defend self-murder, which, even on the principles of Atheism, is in every circumstance a cowardly action; for, again I repeat it, he who does it flies from something which to him appears so dreadful that he dares not face it.

* Voltaire.

Mean

Mean while, Voltaire, let me ask you a few questions. Would you like that your condition should be the same with that of Mohammed?

VOLTAIRE.

God forbid it!

SWIFT.

You amaze me.—Have not you extolled his Religion. as inspiring the finest morals and the noblest spirit of devotion, and often too with a comparative sneer at Christianity? and are you afraid to take your eternal portion with the author of this glorious Religion?

VOLTAIRE.

O SWIFT, I know Mohammed's character. His pretending that God

rewarded his services by a permission to commit adultery ; nay, that God sent the angel Gabriel with a Koran, ordering one of his friends to deliver up to his brutal lust the dear loved wife of his bosom, is such impiety ! never was man guilty of deeper. I know also the lustful and cruel disposition that his Religion inspires.—

SWIFT.

You knew this, as indeed you must, and yet extolled that motley Religion. Your want of sincerity will do you no good. How would you like the condition of your great Confucius?

VOLTAIRE.

THERE was no such person. There might have been some old Chinese of that

that name, whose lessons of honesty were admired by a rude and ignorant age, but who was as different from our idea of the philosopher Confucius, as old Jupiter the rustic tyrant of Crete is from Homer's Jove: both were the fiction of ages.

S W I F T.

AND both of them were improved on the ideas that in different ages were borrowed from that Revelation which you would represent as eclipsed by the perfect Confucius.

You seem happy, Rousseau?

R O U S S E A U.

THE love of virtue that ever inspired my bosom now fills me with joy. Besides, I died in the chearful

O 4

hopes

hopes which are afforded by the Son of Mary, whose godhead my writings have acknowledged. God is good, and Virtue must be joyful; the study of my life was to write for Virtue, and I was persecuted for it. Besides, let the errors of my life be what they may, I will boldly approach the Supreme, and tell him, " 'twas I wrote "*Emilius*," a work which I trust will wipe out the faults of my whole life*.

* The following are his words, speaking of his *Emilius*,—— *Lisez & jugez vous-mêmes. Malheur à vous, si, durant cette lecture, votre cœur ne benit pas cent fois l'homme vertueux & ferme, qui ose instruire ainsi les humains. Eh! comment me résoudrais-je à justifier cet ouvrage? Moi, qui crois effacer par lui les fautes de ma vie entière; moi, qui mets les maux qu'il m'attire en compensation de ceux que j'ai faits; moi, qui, plein de confiance, espère un jour dire, Juge supreme, daigne juger dans*

S W I F T.

You have talked much of Virtue,
'tis true: But what think you of Chris-
tianism?

R O U S S E A U.

THAT such a system should have
been contrived by the authors of the
New Testament, is more impossible
than all the miracles it contains *: Yet
there are some things in it which no
reasonable man can believe *.

S W I F T.

WHERE there are such evident
stamps of Divinity, whether is a hum-

*ta clémence un homme foible ; j'ai fait le mal sur la
terre, mais j'ai publié cet écrit. What delirium
of arrogance and self-conceit ! Alas, poor
Rousseau !*

* Both asserted by Rousseau.

ble

ble acquiescence in what appears difficult, or a pert refusal of the whole because some parts are above his comprehension; which of these parts, I say, is best becoming a man in his first and dark state of existence, called human life?

ROUSSEAU.

UNDOUBTEDLY the humble part.

SWIFT.

YET this you refused. Did the heathen world ever produce a perfect system of morals?

ROUSSEAU.

No.

SWIFT.

Does the New Testament present a perfect one?

ROUS-

ROUSSEAU.

MOST gloriously it does ; and my writings have acknowledged it.

SWIFT.

AND your writings have endeavoured to undermine the divine authority of the New Testament. Cicero asks, “ Where is the Philosopher that lives “ according to his own fine precepts ?” The Pagan world confessed there was a nameless something wanting to make the precepts of Virtue sink into the heart. The New Testament not only gives the most perfect system of morals, but comes with an authority which Philosophy can never supply. What service then have you been doing to Virtue by endeavouring to de-

stroy

stroy its surest support, the authority
 which Revelation presents? And
 what service to mankind to return
 them to that wretched condition of
 which Cicero complains? As to your
 boasted Emilius, what new tie have you
 there added to any duty? what new
 motive to any virtue? I see you would
 mention the education of children;
 alas! it is theory that in many cases
 can never be brought into practice,
 and in others is as absurd as Locke's
 proposal for mothers to teach their
 children the Latin tongue. Besides,
 are you certain there is no evil conse-
 quence would arise from your scheme?
 The human breast earnestly pants af-
 ter certainty, and where the princi-
 ples are fixed, Virtue is most vigo-
 rous; but does not your Emilius re-
 commend

commend Scepticism? and to doubt
 is to wither the nerves of Virtue.—
 Alas, you are silent!—Where now is the
 presumptuous appeal to the Almighty,
 “I wrote Emilius!” Alas, it will
 check your triumph, when at the
 awful bar of the Supreme, you are
 reminded that Self-murder is one of
 the virtues you have recommended.

ROUSSEAU.

You had your failings—pity mine—
 that appeal was the heat of delirium.—

SWIFT.

I BELIEVE it; and happy for you
 if the Judge find it such. I will now
 tell you what I have some reason to
 think will be your different sentences,
 which at this time will not be final.
 Voltaire, you have called Bayle a glo-
 rious

rious luminary, and said that he spent his life in the search of truth, but always found error. Among the caverns of yonder valley he is now condemned to suffer the punishment of perverted talents. He is stone blind, and is surrounded by five or six hundred ghosts of illiterate peasants, to whom he frequently harangues. He has been about seven earthly days examining a block of marble to find whether it was lead or gold. At last he thought he made the important discovery : He called the rustics around him, and produced his arguments with all his wonted learning and subtilty ; and still inclining to the base side of the question, summing up all his proofs, he confidently asserted that the block was lead. Heard you that burst of rustic laughter and
jeer?

jeer? His audience have undeceived
 him, and he now suffers from their con-
 tempt. Near to this glorious luminary
 will you, Voltaire, for some time be
 placed. You will often drink of a cup
 filled from the River of Forgetfulness;
 your former bias of soul and all your
 wit will still remain, your death only
 will be forgotten. Thousands of the Phi-
 losophers of antiquity will daily attend
 you; their attention will please you, and
 your humour as wont will ridicule the
 follies of men; but, true to your for-
 mer self, though the absurdities of su-
 perstition awake your satire, it will
 instantly transfer itself to the religion
 of Messiah, and blending it with the
 trumpery of jarring sects, you will
 dress it out in the most ludicrous, even
 odious garb, as the weakness, the
 folly

folly of human nature. But your triumph will not be long. Touched by an angel, your delirium will leave you, and Christianity, different from your picture of her as consummate beauty from foulest deformity, will appear in the *simplex munditiis* of the New Testament. The contempt with which the Philosophers will treat your unfairness will wound your soul with all the fever of shame; and while thus the days of your life are repeated, the presence of Rousseau and his Gouvernanté, the Journalists de Trevoux, the Abbé Des Fontaines, and all you have ridiculed on earth, will add scorpion stings to your punishment by their witnessing the detection of your misrepresentations, and joining in the contempt they deserve. The cup of Forgetfulness will

will again be administered to you, till every day of your manhood is repeated, and till every misrepresentation, and every impious and immoral sentiment which your works contain, have recoiled upon yourself by exposing you to ridicule and shame ; and till, lastly, your account of *l'amour Socratique* come forth. Here Ridicule will withdraw her leering smiles, but Indignation will burn in every eye that beholds you, while sculking from region to region you will vainly endeavour to wipe out your stain. This, Voltaire, ere the final day will be your preparatory punishment : may it be purgatory too !

For you, Rousseau, a beam from heaven stole across your soul at the hour of death : yet at certain periods

P

will

will you be doomed to wander the earth. At the evening hour an angel will take you to where the youthful and gay assemble in the Tavern: You will there hear your works praised, and virtue on every tongue; but you will also see their hearts: There you will see the effects of your works—a contempt of revelation, and a vague partial idea of virtue without any hold on the heart. As the wine inflames them, blasphemy and a plastic God will furnish conversation. Revenge will darken the soul of one, Lust will boil up in the breast of another, and a fretful gloomy impatience of disappointment will brood over the selfish mind of a third; till issuing out, the morning shall behold one plunging his sword in the bosom of his friend,
 another

another flinging to the embraces of his benefactor's beloved wife, and another applying a pistol to his head, cruelly regardless of the tears of his friends, or of the anguish he is bringing on his aged Father.

ROUSSEAU.

HEAVENS, how you amaze me! My works recommend no such crimes. And have not Christians done the same?

SWIFT.

BAPTIZED people have done them all. But never did one who acted under the influence of the Christian philosophy proceed to these enormities; for its divine authority believed implies the greatest restraint; but

P 2

where

where you have made that authority despised, the human passions are much too strong for the vague and imperfect impressions of virtue which the best human philosophy leaves on the heart. And if self-murder, as you affirm, is in any case whatever allowable, what is to hinder every individual to imagine that his own petty disgust * amounts to the allowable case? For one's ownself must be the only judge; and to allow oneself to judge in so important a case, a case where Passion sits umpire, what is this but to open the flood-gates of destruction upon mankind! O Voltaire, O Rousseau, what

* The celebrated philosopher Zeno thought the aching of his finger amounted to the allowable case, and accordingly hanged himself.

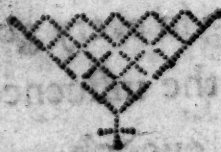
a heaven

a heaven have you lost ! Had your talents never been employed to wound the interest of Piety and Virtue, what serenity might you now have possessed ! But had your abilities been exerted in enforcing the obligations of Virtue, and in uniting her to Piety, her genuine mother, from which vain Philosophy would often set her astray, how exalted would your bliss have been ! While perhaps roving from paradise to paradise, from star to star, with what extacy would you have looked down on the planet earth, when warmed by the thought that future angels were there ripening in every godlike endowment under the influence of your labours.—But enough ;—you have lost this heaven, and one of you in particular with very different feelings must
 cast

cast his eye on the earth.—And when
the earth shall be no more, when the
last Judgement shall arrive, would to
God the innocence of your hearts may
appear; and may it be allowed as an
alleviation of the evil consequences of
your writings!

F I N I S

Times



F. J. W.

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